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Summer • 1954

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THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR

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American Thought: The Angle of Vision

MAX LERNER

THE AMERICAN AVERSION to intellectual system-building is striking when contrasted with Continental thought. Perhaps those who felt sure they were shaping in social actuality what Jefferson called an "empire for freedom" did not hunger for empire-building in the realm of the mind. Daniel Boorstin has suggested, in *The Genius of American Politics*, that the reason Americans have found political theory superfluous is that they have accepted the "givenness" of their institutions; and where something is "given," it needs no laborious definition. In the European sense, Americans have had little "grand theory," whether of the state, the economy, the society, the culture, Nature or God. In a number of the towering figures—Jefferson and Lincoln in political thinking, James and Peirce in philosophy, Veblen in social theory—one finds a rich array of fragments rather than an artfully laid out master plan. Peirce despaired of ever making his philosophical ends meet, and both Emerson and Whitman flaunted the contradictions in their thinking. Americans have a fear of rigidifying thought. They believe that forms are empty—an antipathy to formal thinking which has caused them to shy away from programs of long-range

✪ MAX LERNER is now a professor of American Civilization and Dean of the Graduate School at Brandeis University and a columnist on the *New York Post*. This article is a section of his book which will be published in the winter by Simon and Schuster under the title *America as a Civilization*.

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social change. Thus American thought is tentative, fragmented, directed at the immediate object, and open to change at both ends.

Except for the brief period of the Puritan oligarchy, American thinkers have also been largely free of the appeal to authority and revelation. One of their dilemmas has been to square their basic nonconformism with the stability required by property and investment. When property was riding highest, firm in the saddle of power, the nonconformism almost dropped out of American thought—as it did through much of the quarter-century from the Civil War to the Populist revolt. American thinkers have been at their best in their anti-authoritarianism: in the dicta of Jefferson and Madison on freedom of thought, in the pamphleteering of the Jacksonians, in Calhoun's plea for a veto-power by which political minorities could hold their place, in Thoreau's doctrines of "civil disobedience," in the thunderbolts of Henry Demarest Lloyd against Standard Oil, in Brooks Adams' gloomy predictions of "centralization and decay," in William James's "pluralistic universe," in Justice Holmes's "can't help's," in Veblen's polemics against "absentee owners." Even American conservatism, unlike that of Europe's ruling groups, has relied less on authoritarianism than on the attraction of the Big Money.

Every generalization about American thought can be offset by a counter-generalization. Suppose you mention the lack of mystical thinkers: except for some of the early Puritan divines you will be on good ground; yet in Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, James and Faulkner there is a remarkable power in the handling of symbolism. If you note how much of American thought has been secular and rationalist, you are confronted in reply by the tradition damning the merely rational, from the divines who denied that it could encompass the mysteries of God's ways with man, to the latter-day thinkers who find that the concept of a purely rational man excludes all the half-aberrant, half-heroic ways by which men belie the blueprints of their minds.

If you deny tragic depth in American thought, there are Hawthorne and Melville again to refute you; and Mark Twain, whose comic mask scarcely hides his pessimism of spirit; and Lincoln, whose tragic sense belied the humorous anecdotes by which he

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tried to make the ordeal of civil war tolerable. If you say that American thought has a feet-on-the-ground realism, you must correct the picture with the millennialist tracts spawned by the experimental communist settlements, and the creative utopian classics of Bellamy, Donnelly and Howells. Finally, if you say that American thought—like the American class system—remained pluralistic instead of single-tracked, and was hostile to any scheme of rigid determinism, a minority report would again note the determinism of Frederick Jackson Turner, of Henry and Brooks Adams, of Veblen, and Beard.

Certain historical trends, at least, are clear. American thought has moved from the utopian and millennialist to a focusing on the calculable future, from a single-factor determinism in history to the more complex multiple-factor view, from religious to secular, from idealist to empiricist, from focusing on purposes to focusing on means, from absolutist to pragmatic, from radical to reformist or conservative. On some themes it has gone through cyclical alternations of mood and emphasis. But always there has been the steady beat of change in American life, carrying with it a constant change in the angle of vision of the American thinkers.

In a search for the roots of American thought the first clue is in the interrelations of religion and capitalism. The quest that led to the settlement of America, from the beginning of the seventeenth century to the middle of the twentieth, was a search at once for freedom of conscience and for the El Dorado of the big money. Both quests were utopian in aiming at an ideal community; both were stubbornly practical, responding to felt needs. American social thought was thus, from the start, compounded of conscience and practicality.

The first expression of the American conscience took the form of Puritanism—the fullest amalgam of religion, economics and politics within a single mold that Americans ever achieved. Although the Puritan strain came to be watered down, American thought never wholly lost its preoccupation with God's design on the American continent and with the alternate beat of conscience and acquisitiveness. This suggests a key problem in American in-

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tellectual history: how did the early absolutism of conscience turn into the pragmatism of the later period, and how have strong elements of both managed to coexist in the American mind?

A crucial link between the two was individualism. Since a man's conscience was in his own keeping, he had to allow others also to answer to theirs alone. Thus religious laissez faire was a strong source of American individualism. It was reinforced by the doctrine of "calling." Puritan thought was dedicated to the City of God and an unremitting enmity to the Adversary. "Calling" started as the reception of grace which marked the commitment to God and the release from the Adversary; it grew into the economic "calling" by which a man's vocation and its accumulated fruits became an outward sign of inner grace. Americans are so concerned with private property not because they are made of more grasping human stuff than others, but because their culture developed in a climate where a man's individuality was linked with property as a sign of grace, just as it is linked with his conscience as a witness of his identity. The individualist strain was further reinforced by the Christian allegory—the tradition of willingness to incur martyrdom for conscience.

A final link was needed before the chain of thought forming American individualism could be complete. This was the doctrine of natural rights, with its origins in European thought and a life history of its own in its American locale. It gave a metaphysical basis to the civil-liberties tradition in America, which holds that the freedoms of thought and utterance, like freedom of worship, are rooted in the "laws of Nature and of Nature's God." Through the link of "Nature's God," much of the emotion attaching to the allegory of martyrdom as well as the doctrine of grace was carried over into the "natural order." Americans came to regard everything related to their individualism as part of that natural order—not only their rights to freedom, but also their rights to property.

This freedom-property complex has dominated American thinking throughout the nation's history. It managed to combine the strongly mystical intensity of seventeenth-century thought with the deism of the eighteenth century, the world of transcendence with that of rationalism. To the deeply religious it offered the nourish-

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ment of belief; to the skeptical and rationalist it offered secular sustenance. To the nineteenth-century mind it made possible the linking of social progress with individual freedom. For the nationalists it provided a *mystique* by which freedom, capitalism and individualism combined to explain the success of the American experiment.

Thus was formed a pattern woven of individualism, Puritanism, conscience, vocation, the allegory of martyrdom, the belief in natural rights, the passion for freedom, and the clinging to property. Within it there have been swings of emphasis—cycles of thought moving spirally in response to the needs and changes of American life.

In its origins, as we have seen, the dominant strain was religious and absolutist. But the sharp advance of science and the democratic impact of the frontier undercut this emphasis. As a result there was a movement toward religious tolerance, the multiplying of sects, and the undermining of authoritarianism, which set the pattern for American religious thought.

In the 1820's and 1830's, new winds of doctrine blew westward from Europe in the form of German mysticism and merged with the democratic energies of Western farmers and Eastern intellectuals. The leaders of this transcendentalist movement were Emerson, Brownson, and the Concord group. Strongly idealist in its philosophical roots, it contained within itself the counterpoint to Jacksonian tough-mindedness. Its historians and philosophers saw in the American experience, as in the whole religious experience, the working out of a transcendent idea of good or truth. But some of them began to identify this idea with the good of the common people, the welfare of majorities, and the truth of democracy, from which it was only a step to the reformism which made social gains, rather than a transcendent idea in history, the test of action and thought. As the seedbed for much that was to follow, this strain held within itself the beginnings of hardheaded movements for reform, along with utopian and millennial schemes. Eventually its discordance grew too great to be contained within a single school; and as it burst, the fragments flew in many directions. But

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during its "Golden Day," its core lay in the strength which the American democratic experience gave to the fusion of German philosophical mysticism with the original intensity of American religious feeling.

In formal terms transcendentalism hardened into a bloodless academic idealism. But its more important offshoots were not in formal philosophy but in the "democratic vistas" of Walt Whitman and the sense of excitement about the energies of the rising nation. Between the Age of Jackson and the Age of Big Business, the driving force in American social thought was the search for a base on which these expanding national energies could build. For a time the struggle over slavery channeled the search into questions of constitutional law and political theory. Calhoun sought a theory to protect the minority rights of the South and the slave-owning property interest without breaking with the basic idea of a federal union. As Louis Hartz has pointed out, he did not see that the logic of the Secession movement led to a cult of sections which were nations in themselves, and which found a fighting faith in the rightness of their own "peculiar institution." In the North there was a similar groping for an absolutism of individual freedom, which in turn did not dare envisage the cost of the Civil War.

With the end of the War two opposing *mystiques* emerged—Whitman's "leaves of grass" democracy and the Divine Right of Property. Each formed a complex of religion, politics and economics, and around them the forces of radicalism and conservatism took up their positions. When the gap between laissez faire and social welfare became too obvious after the Civil War, conservative thought called into play the new popular interest in the Darwinian theories. The jungle character of the economic struggle was frankly admitted, but it was justified and even glorified by "Social Darwinism" on the ground that Nature had decreed it. The new "natural law" came to be "natural selection" in the triumph of the "fit" who survived.

The stretch from the turn of the century to the New Deal saw a movement of pragmatism that reached into law, politics, history, education, business, labor, science, and even art and religion. Its seminal minds in philosophy were Peirce, James, Dewey. In eco-

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nomics Veblen maintained a withering fire against the abstractions of the English classical school and the Austrian "marginal utility" school, championing a home-grown attitude that studied economic "institutions" in their whole life-context; and Wesley Mitchell applied his insights to the study of business cycles. In law Holmes asserted that "the life of the law is not logic but experience," asking how the "reasonable man" would assess the customs of his group, and what the "bad man" would be unable to get away with; and Brandeis developed the technique of shaping the judicial judgment less to the logic-chopping of "mechanical jurisprudence" than to the community experience. In history James Harvey Robinson and Charles Beard gave new vitality to the relation between social movements and the history of ideas, emphasizing the driving forces of class interest and the ways by which men rationalized these drives. In "progressive education," Dewey stressed the growth and experience of the child as he "learns by doing."

Through these variations there ran the common thread of the revolt against formalism—that truth did not lie in absolutes or in mechanical formulas, but in the whole operative context of individual growth and social action in which the idea was embedded. This intellectual base made possible, as it also expressed, the political reform movements from Theodore Roosevelt to Franklin Roosevelt.

The most recent phase of the cyclical swing has been a revolt against the pragmatic revolt. It has taken the form of an attack on what Lewis Mumford has called "the pragmatic acquiescence" —including chiefly the phases of American culture that vulgarized the meaning of pragmatism, reducing truth to whatever "works," thereby casting out other standards of value. As in religion, American intellectuals have again been groping for a transcendental faith, turning against the pragmatic on the ground that it ignores the depths of the psyche and the tragic dimensions of life. To some extent this meant a rejection of the humanist matter-of-factness associated with realism in philosophy, law, economics and politics; but as a repudiation of mass-values, it was also a humanist reassertion of the role of the individual personality as against the operation of group interests and the calculus of mass-welfare.

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Thus the cyclical swing in the history of American thought has moved in a wide arc from the tough to the mystical, back to the pragmatic, and again to the transcendental. To some extent the cleavage between realists and pragmatists on one side and idealists and absolutists on the other has measured roughly a cleavage between the progressive and conservative forces. This parallelism can be carried too far. Thoreau and Brownson, each in his own way a radical in politics, were transcendentalists in philosophy. Veblen started as a Kantian, as did John Dewey. The whole philosophy of conservative Big Business thinking, on the other hand, is thoroughly pragmatic.

However it must be qualified in application, the parallel does hold. The reformist appeal has generally been from social actuality to social possibility, from the facts of poverty and inequity to the potentials of a fast-moving society which can minimize both. Most liberal and radical reformers have made a habit of thinking in these terms of the socially actual and the socially possible. For the conservative, on the other hand, the absolute and the transcendental offer the advantage of being abstracted from the immediate struggles of society, hanging somewhere (as Holmes put it) as a "brooding omnipresence in the sky," never having to be brought down to earth.

Unlike the European societies where the radical movements have a Marxist intensity, in America it is the conservative movements that have carried the sharper edge. They have appealed to the absolutes of economic freedom and the sanctity of property, while the reformers and liberals (in whose minds the Marxist systems never struck deep roots) have appealed mainly to the moderate goals of progress and the common welfare. This is not to say that American political thought has been dominated by the holders of power. Even with the advantage of power on their side, the conservative thinkers have thought of themselves as fighting a rear-guard action, just as the reformers, on their side, seem forever to be defending civil liberties and are ridden with a sense of ineffectualness. The trait common to both is a Promethean sense of waging an unequal battle to overthrow the reigning divinities. This may shed some light not only on the American character, but

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on American political society, suggesting that power is distributed more diffusely in it than the contending groups are willing to admit.

Of the great political angles of vision, the radical tradition has fared hardest. Its handicap at the start was the fact that the American Revolution was colonial and not social. Once it was over and British imperialism pried loose, the radicals had no enemy target left. Since there had been no social revolution, they could not, like the French after 1789, fight to maintain its gains; with no dictatorships on the American scene, there could be no resistance movements; with no tyrannies, there could be no conspiracies of tyrannicide. Except for the limited episode of Dorr's Rebellion, there were not even—as with the Chartists in England—any grand failures of radical action to be retrieved. As a result, American radicalism remained a series of sporadic and sometimes eccentric flare-ups which kept alive the equalitarian dream, but had no sustained program, no continuing party, nor even a body of common doctrine.

It did serve as the intellectual left wing of the great liberal movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This was true of some of Jefferson's circle who attacked the newly rising capitalist class as agrarian radicals but whose ideas proved usable in a later industrial era. There was also a Jacksonian left wing which saw the worker and farmer as protagonists in the struggle against the tyranny of money. The anti-slavery left wing was in abolitionist thinkers like Garrison, Wendell Phillips and Theodore Parker, who prepared the ground for the slavery struggle, and in the Radical Republicans who laid down a devastating fire against Lincoln's compromises. In the 1890's, left-wing thinkers like Henry Demarest Lloyd gave form to the Populist drive against railroads and trusts which made Bryanism possible; nor could the victory of Wilson's "New Freedom" in 1912 have taken place if it were not for novelists David Graham Phillips, Howells, and Frank Norris; muckrakers Lincoln Steffens and Upton Sinclair; and constitutional critic J. Allen Smith. Finally the New Deal had intellectual roots in Veblen, Beard and Parrington; and Roosevelt's left-wing critics proved as troublesome as Lincoln's.

There were also more cantankerous intellectual movements

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which spent their energies in isolated radical episodes—the Fourierists and other experiments in communal living, the movement for "People's Banks" in Jackson's era, the schemes for currency reform, the plans for salvation through Henry George's "single tax" or other creeds, the "twenty-four hour violence" of episodes from Shays' Rebellion to Coxey's Army and the Bonus marchers, the sustained violence of the IWW "Wobblies" and their syndicalist dream of "one Big Union," the succession of third-party movements including that of LaFollette in 1924 and Wallace in 1948. Despite their crotchety character, the radical thinkers released some of the sturdier energies of American striving.

What then accounts for their final failure? Some clues will be found in the pace of social change and the constant sense of dynamism, the moving American frontier, the persistence of the open-class system. Most important is the folk belief in the going economic and social system. Labor support, without which there could be no class base for radical thought, was given not to the radicals but to the liberal reformers. The Socialist Party, which was bidding for popular support as late as 1920, failed because its dogma of a future commonwealth and of "pie in the sky" seemed unreal to workers who were finding life better here and now. The Communists—if they can be considered radicals and not reactionaries—reached their peak of influence in the Great Depression and the early New Deal; in the late 1930's and 1940's they became entangled in the net of Party conspiracy, moral betrayal and the gyrations of the Party line, and dribbled away what little remaining support they had.

The radicals could not compete with the liberal reformers in an immediate concrete program, yet had no long-range program. They could not preach "revolution" effectively in a society where actual revolution—in the form of continuous technical and social change—was taking place all around. Nor could they rally the embittered, since even the hopeless retained a shred of hope for their children's future. They could find no rich soil for their dogma in the minds of people who every decade were turning more strongly toward immediate goals and pragmatic means.

What the radicals succeeded in doing was important: they re-

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affirmed the equalitarian impulse by fresh challenges to swollen power, injustice, human indifference about suffering. Denouncing corruption, plutocracy and the vested interests, they were obsessed with a dualism between the angels of light and the princes of darkness. They tried to measure American institutions against the original vision, harking back to an American Eden before the Fall. Not content to gloss over class difference and struggles, they saw that all exercise of political power involves conflict. What they did in their episodic attacks was to feel out the strength of the dominant economic minority, testing whether it had gone slack or retained its creativeness. The answer they got was a double one: from the managerial groups, the wavering evidence that they could continue their revolution of production; from the liberals, the resolve to organize this production within a system of controls which could raise living standards for all.

Thus the fragmented American radicalism, little more than a succession of spasmodic local movements of protest and passion, served to keep both the conservatives and liberals alert. Despite the low estate of radical thought during the cold-war era, an intellectual pattern so constant through American history is likely to find renewal.

The conservative intellectual tradition, while it has lacked the Thoreaus, Whitmans, Debses and Dreisers that radicalism has had, has a stronger hold on the American mind. Unlike their European parallels, who relied upon tradition and authority, religion, state-worship, family and order, American conservatives boldly captured the citadel of the liberal enemy by taking over its high ground of individualism and natural rights. They believed that men have natural—that is, deeply rooted—rights, but insisted that there can be no fulfillment of those rights where the state intervenes in individual economic choices. Thus they appealed to the position of the individual in an indestructible order of Nature that precedes human history. They attempted to build a solid intellectual support for property by invoking the same humanist and individualist symbols which have sustained the liberals in their attacks on property. Like them they refrained from too explosive a discussion of ends.

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They have taken for granted the same goal as the liberals—that of the "American dream." But, in rhetoric at least, they almost appropriated the symbol as their own; and once in their hands, it has been stripped of its equalitarian emphasis and gives property overtones.

But the conservatives could not maintain this position without making serious concessions on concrete issues—trade unions, minimum wages, child labor, social insurance, public control of power sources, corporate monopoly. While retaining the catchwords of individualism and freedom, they cemented their hold on men's minds by premising a natural order presided over by neither God nor justice, nor even equality of opportunity, but the brute struggle of the market. It was against this conservative tradition that the progressive reformers of the turn of the century directed their assaults. For under the guise of freedom, conservative thought had built an iron trap in which there was no escape from the ruthlessness of brute struggle and survival, including the changes and chances of the business cycle. More than anything else this furnished the emotional drive behind the reformism of the New Deal.

In another sense also the conservatives became too rigid—in their view of the human situation as a constant. ("You can't change human nature.") This pessimist determinism was at the opposite pole from the perfectionist and plastic view of the human situation which the radicals had. The conservative view was reinforced by the sense of sin in the tradition of evangelical religion. But it could not be maintained in a shifting society and an expanding economy where the individual was always re-creating his career, and where the evidences of the transformation wrought by man's will and intelligence were witness against the over-rigid view of human traits.

The deepest source of the strength of conservatism has been its succession of social *mystiques*. The earliest was the cult of the aristocracy—or, as Fisher Ames put it, the government of "the wise, the rich, and the good." This was followed by the cult of the Constitution, to which Marshall and Story so powerfully contributed. This in turn was followed by the cult of property in the natural order, of which the appeal to Social Darwinism was a phase. Property came to be seen as something sanctioned at once by

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"Nature and Nature's God," and further fortified by being linked with the worker who was worthy of the fruits of his labor, and the businessman who had mingled his managerial skill with the products of industry. The most recent *mystique* for conservatives is that of anti-liberal nationalism, especially powerful in an era of war and cold war. The premise is that American power rests on its property institutions, and that attacks on the sanctity of property become subversive of the nation itself.

With all this intellectual panoply, America has nevertheless no articulate conservative philosophy and no outstanding conservative thinkers who can rank with Hamilton, John Adams, and Calhoun among the earlier thinker-statesmen or with William Graham Sumner among social scientists. In political action, rather than formal thought, the best of the recent conservatives have been men like Chief Justice Hughes, Henry Stimson and Wendell Willkie, who held fast to what was best in the tradition but yielded generously to necessary changes. Unfortunately the center of the stage in conservatism is now held by the racist, repressive and ultra-nationalist reactionaries who in every generation produce demagogic figures that strut on the political scene for a brief space and live out their transient and paranoid existence.

It is in the liberal intellectual tradition that American belief has characteristically expressed itself. "The earth belongs to the living," said Jefferson, striking the grand theme that liberalism has since followed. Its credo has been progress, its mode optimist, its view of human nature rationalist and plastic: it has used "human rights" rather than "property rights" as its ends, but has concentrated on the means of social action. It has made "expedient change" an integral part of its methods, and has taken from science the belief in the tools of reason and the tests of validity. It has kept its fighting edge through the emotional force of the reformist impulse.

Latterly the liberal tradition has come in for drastic criticism from liberals, whose new intellectual posture—especially in the academies—seems to be a strain of habitual self-deprecating irony. Much is said of the failure of liberal thought. Certainly there is a need for redefining it within the psychological realities of our time.

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The weaknesses of the liberal tradition are clear enough. First, it is indebted for its individualism to the atomistic thinkers like Hume and Locke who could reduce a society to its members but could not link individuals with each other to form a society. Even the Christian allegory has not repaired this weakness: its willingness to sacrifice came to mean in the American context mostly sacrifice for one's own freedom or identity and not for others, and did not issue in a sense of society. Thus liberalism built a trap for itself with an atomistic philosophy which strengthened the hold of jungle individualism on the American mind.

The second weakness flows from the alliance with pragmatic thought. The strength of this alliance enabled liberalism to focus on concrete situations for reform, undeflected by dogma and abstraction, but made it also vulnerable to the changes and chances of history, squeezing it dry of final values. The "open mind" sometimes became a drafty cave of the winds, the questioning spirit became merely ironic, the revolt against past codes became an extreme relativism which left no standards by which to measure values. Eric Goldman has pointed out how this relativism, a scourge with which to lash the conservatives of the 1890's, turned into an engine of disillusionment in the 1920's. "The trouble with us reformers," said J. Allen Smith, "is that we made reform a crusade against standards. Well, we smashed them all, and now neither we nor anybody else have anything left."

Finally the liberal's view of human nature has stressed the aspirations of the American dream and the supremacy of reason. The more sophisticated thinkers—notably Reinhold Niebuhr—have recognized the irrationalism of the human mind and the limits of willed human action. But most liberals assume (as did the sociologist Lester Ward) that men can transform their environment and fashion their society as their own work of art. Thus the liberal tends to reduce everything to environment, including human nature itself, which becomes plastic material to be molded by reason, without allowing for the stubborn propensities of men.

Yet, however vulnerable, liberalism has emerged as the central expression of the American democratic faith. It is not tied forever

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to the blind worship of experience of which it has been guilty in the past half-century. It has proved intellectually flexible, capable of enrolling determinists like Turner and Beard, and even Social Darwinists like Holmes, but is more at home with the more fluid thinkers. It has absorbed both the optimism of the idealist thinkers and the cynicism of the materialists. But it could evoke from Morris Cohen equal scorn for "those who spin the world out of ideas, and those who look to earth, air, fire, and water to explain all human phenomena." Its best expression has been in thinkers like Charles H. Cooley and George H. Mead, who saw the levels of meaning in the "self" which interacts with the "group," and also saw how complex the web of causation is. It has drawn upon the currents of religious faith, and at the same time based itself strongly upon the ground of scientific method. There are strands of thought that unite figures like Carl Schurz, Henry George, Richard T. Ely, Tom Watson, Bryan, Terence Powderly, Lincoln Steffens, Ida Tarbell, Clarence Darrow, William Allen White, Parrington, Harold Stearns, Herbert Croly, LaFollette and even H. L. Mencken. Add to these the statesmen-thinkers from Jefferson, Madison and Lincoln to Wilson and the two Roosevelts, and it is apparent that liberalism has furnished the dominant political and intellectual climate of America.

Its strength lies in providing an angle of vision for viewing America and a fighting faith for the freedom of the person, higher living standards, and a more spacious way of life. As Maury Maverick phrased it with a perhaps oversimplified pungency, liberalism has always meant "freedom plus groceries"—not only (one may add) for some of the people but for all, not only sometimes but all the time.

Given this angle of vision, it has developed an armory of facts and argument and a passion for battle in its concrete struggles—against the "octopus" of the big corporation, against rate-discrimination by railroads, for free public education, for civil rights, for Negro equality, for religious freedom, for land conservation, for trade-union organization, for aid to farmers at the mercy of a shifting market, for state control of public utilities, for public use

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of natural resources, for public development of hydro-electric power, for wage-and-hour legislation, for women's rights, for social security.

These are, of course, piecemeal reforms which do not add up to a unified program. The radicals have also expressed their disdain for liberals because of the lack of toughness in fighting their big enemies. The charges strike home. Yet the radical movements that sought to supply the long-range plans and the tough means have sputtered fitfully and died, while conservatism which scorns the liberal vision finds that it must rely mainly on social power rather than on intellectual persuasion. American liberalism is one of the few movements in history which have not been based on authority or force yet have held their dominance in the empire of the mind. Its basic premise has been in a majority will which is capable of organizing itself effectively when the obstructions are blasted away by the dynamite of facts and ideas. The failures to reach the goal have been frequent and glaring, but they have been recognized and taken in stride.

This does not mean that liberalism has been free of the tensions of constant struggle. Actually one of its emotional drives is a flagellant sense of guilt over the gap between the democratic rhetoric and the social reality. With it there is a too credulous hope that all would be well if only some obstacle were removed, some enemy overcome, some reform achieved. It has been one of the illusions of liberal reformers that the only changes required to build Jerusalem on America's green and promised land are changes in social mechanisms. If only the newspapers were in the hands of the right people, if only there were a third party, if only there were currency reforms, if only the press allowed a free play of opinion, if only the schools paid their teachers enough and adopted progressive techniques, if only the movies showed fewer crime pictures and television reduced the violence of its programs. This "heart's desire" liberalism has a counterpart in the breakdown of perspective among paranoid liberals who feel surrounded by devil-figures. Perhaps with greater maturity and a psychology that cuts deeper, the liberals will manage to achieve a long view without losing their militancy.

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Pages from the Autobiography of Ellen Glasgow

IN 1914 I SPENT A PART OF THE SPRING and summer in England. I remember perfect weather, and for the first time, I met those living English authors whose work I could admire without reservation. The American authors I admired so heartily were all dead; for it was impossible for even the most sanguine imagination to restore Hawthorne, Thoreau, Emerson, or Poe to the ungrateful flesh. Even Hawthorne's fame was slightly dimmed, because, it was felt that, after all, he was deficient in "brightness." In the case of Emerson, there was also a lack of "brightness," though there remained, oddly enough, an abundance of light. At this time, or a little earlier, one of our most respected critics was declaring "In my opinion *The Awakening of Helena Richie* is a greater book than *Anna Karenina*, because it presents a higher ideal of womanhood. . . ."

Early in June I spent some unforgettable hours with Thomas Hardy and his fine young wife, to whom he owed the subdued tranquillity of his later years. My friend Louise Collier Willcox was with me, and, in response to an invitation from Mrs. Hardy, we drove out from Dorchester to tea at Max Gate. The afternoon was brilliant with one of those rare English days in which heaven appears to touch the earth. Our reception was charming, and I had no difficulty in hearing Hardy's voice. Somewhat to my surprise, for I had heard that he could not be made to speak of his work, Hardy talked to me, freely and frankly, about his books. His poetry would outlive his novels, he believed, and he gave the impression of caring little for the *Wessex Tales*, which had brought him fame.

✪ These excerpts from Miss Glasgow's autobiography, to be published in the autumn by Harcourt, Brace and Company as *The Woman Within*, are presented here for the first time by permission of Frank Morley and Irita Van Doren, her literary executors.

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He did not hesitate to say that he considered *The Dynasts* his greatest work (he may have said "best") and he was pleased when he found that I had read it all, and was able to repeat from the "Semi-chorus of the Years":

> O Immanence, that reasonest not,
> In putting forth all things begot,
> Thou build'st Thy house in space—for what?

Hardy smiled. "Not many have read that."

His reticence was attractive to me, for it made whatever he said well worth the saying. He was small in stature, and, unlike so many other old men, especially old men of letters, he was immaculately neat in his appearance. His face was small and worn to sharpness, but the skin was singularly clear, with a tinge of red on the cheekbones; and in both his expression and his manner there was the quality of wistfulness, as if he wished to be kind, but was not quite sure he was going about it in the right way.

I told him I thought "A Blinded Bird" the most beautiful of his shorter poems. He replied that he liked it, too, and that it was written to a real bird. When we talked of his novels, I confessed that I could never decide whether I cared most for *The Return of the Native* or for *Jude the Obscure*. He told me with pride that his wife had read all his novels when she was twelve years old. His face lighted with pleasure, as if he were relating something extraordinary. Of all the human beings I have known, none could have been more natural or less pretentious. From the beginning, it was easy to reach an understanding. In our philosophy of life we soon touched a sympathetic chord; for he told me that he also had suffered all his life over the inarticulate agony of the animal world. "I have often wondered," he added, with that wistful smile, "whether I'd choose the lot of a wild or of a domestic animal; and I think, all things considered, I'd choose the lot of the wild."

His wire-haired terrier Wessex, afterwards famous in literary biography, never left his side, except to jump up in a chair at the table when tea was brought in. He was a very attractive little dog, not yet a year old, and as his master remarked, affectionately, "always ready for his tea."

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As we drove away from the house, in the late afternoon, I looked back and saw Hardy standing in the doorway with Wessex in his arms.

A world war and a personal life and death came and passed before I saw him again. I could not have believed, on that cloudless day in June, that thirteen years, of anxiety and horror and a little joy, would go by before I spent another spring and summer in England. Nor did I suspect that this would be my last glimpse of Hardy, who died a few months after my visit.

In London, I had hesitated whether or not I should go down to Dorchester. "I shouldn't go, if I were you," Hugh Walpole had said to me. "I haven't seen him since the war, but I hear he is much changed."

Still I hesitated, but, in the end, I wrote to Mrs. Hardy, and I received, by return post, a cordial note asking me to stop for tea when we were motoring by Dorchester. She wrote that Hardy had been ill, but he was now much better, though he was able to see very few visitors. And she added: "How kind of you to remember our dear old Wessex. He died of old age just three months ago. Somebody has given us a Persian kitten, but it can never fill the place of Wessex in our hearts." Few incidents have given me a more vivid sense of the relentless passage of time. Only a short while before, I had seen Wessex as a puppy, and now, after so brief a period, he was dead of old age.

There were two other guests, the Tomlinsons, father and son, at Max Gate that afternoon, in 1927, and the conversation was more general. But Hardy himself had not changed. He was still gentle, considerate, with a poetic fire in his glance when he spoke of something that moved him. They had a handsome blue Persian kitten, but he told me he missed Wessex more and more. "Wessex was so fond of the wireless," he said, "that I used to get up early in the morning and come downstairs to turn it on for him." And, presently, he took me out into the garden, and showed me the little grave where Wessex was buried. Then we talked of Stonehenge, and the way it had still preserved its ancient air of sacrifice. When I spoke of his novels, he dismissed them with a gesture, and replied that he was interested, now, only in verse. His poetry he appeared

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to love deeply, and I have come to wonder whether he was right, after all, in his estimate of his own work. It is possible, since poetry has an enduring fibre, that some of his poems may outlast his great fiction.

I was glad that I had not taken Hugh Walpole's advice, and that I had come again to Max Gate; but, as I left, I had a premonition, stronger than certainty, that I should never see Hardy again. In the autumn, after I returned to America, his death was announced, and I read, then, among other appraisals of his work, an article, by "a distinguished American critic," which contained a strange comment upon Hardy's personality. It seemed that this man of letters had called on Hardy some months before his death, and after this visit, when the convenient reporter had asked the American critic his impression, he replied in the single word, "stony." Well, if I had been asked my impression, I also might have replied in a single word, but that one word would have been, "sympathetic." . . .

But we must go back thirteen years, to the summer of 1914. Another perfect day was the one we spent with Joseph Conrad and his family at Capel House in Kent, where they were then living. Although Conrad's work, with the exception of *Heart of Darkness*, has not, in my judgment, lasted so well, at the time of my visit to him, I was familiar with every book, and with almost every line, he had written. And I found the man very attractive, with a lovable personality, capricious and fascinating. His dark, animated face, with the prominent cheekbones and the narrow chin, held a shy woodland charm of its own. He had a strong foreign accent, and his occasional slips in English idiom increased the impression of other-worldliness. Yet he was a brilliant talker, and he was never at a loss, apparently, for a word or a magic phrase.

From the first instant of meeting, I felt we were friends, and I was gratified when he told Louise Willcox that he thought I was doing better work than any other American woman novelist. He showed me some of his manuscripts, with scarcely a word left unchanged, for he was a patient and precise craftsman. "I'll come back next summer," I said, lightly, as we parted; but I never saw him again. Within a few months, England was at war, and my summers abroad came to a sudden pause. After that one day in Kent,

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I have always loved the memory of Conrad; and when he came to New York to visit his publishers, I had a characteristic letter from him, telling me that he had hoped to see me in Richmond before he sailed; but his chronic malady, the gout, had attacked him, violently, since he came to America, and he was compelled to bring his visit to an abrupt close. It was for him, I heard, an unhappy visit; and before I again saw England, he had died and was resting in Canterbury. But I shall always think of him as a lost friend, with a natural innocence of heart which left him too utterly at the mercy of circumstances. One longed to defend both him and his fame from unscrupulous exploitation.

A few evenings after we had been to Capel House, we dined with the Galsworthys, and I remembered that Conrad had told me that he was the first person to see John and Ada after they went away together. It was a happy evening. Mrs. Galsworthy had (and, I suppose, still has) a most appealing personality. She seemed to me to be the woman he had idealized in *The Patrician,* lovely and passive, with the consecrated air that so frequently invites martyrdom. When I looked at John Galsworthy, I reflected that it is a minor tragedy to be born either before or after one's proper time in the world's history. He was one of the most distinguished men, both in appearance and in manner, whom I have ever known; and though he was no longer in his youth, he had the features and the bearing of the lost ages of chivalry. For he belonged, essentially, as his art belonged, to the rapidly disappearing era of the gentleman. Even before the First World War had swept out the gentleman, as an institution, and had swept in "the tough guy," as an authority, the foundations of the moral order were beginning to crumble.

Much as I loved *The Country House,* I said to John Galsworthy *The Man of Property* would always remain, for me, his finest novel. Though the whole *Forsyte Saga* came afterwards, I have never changed my opinion; and I am glad I met him in 1914, when I could speak with entire sincerity of my great admiration for his books. The books he wrote during the War, such sentimental romances as *The Saint's Progress* and *Beyond,* appeared to me to be obviously second best. So long as he was faithful to his greatest creation, Soames Forsyte, he was a superb novelist; but in his later middle age, he allowed

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himself to become preoccupied, in a literary sense, with the trivial problems of the young girl. Like his central figure in *The Dark Flower,* he was unable to divorce sex from sentimentality. But I met him before his work had softened and thinned, and I was completely under the spell of *The Man of Property* and *The Country House.* As a man, he seemed to me, that evening, to represent the best example of what English tradition could attain, aristocratic, distinguished, humane, and compassionate.

The next day he sent me an autographed copy of *The Country House* and a copy, too, of Hudson's *The Purple Land,* which he extravagantly overestimated. . . .

When we told the Galsworthys that the Arnold Bennetts had asked us to tea the next afternoon, Mrs. Galsworthy remarked in her pensive voice, "I wonder what you will think of him." She added that she liked and admired him, and so did John, though there were persons who considered him—I cannot recall her exact expression, but it meant, in English idiom, "a bit of a bounder." There was little doubt, I felt, of my liking the man who had written *The Old Wives' Tale,* which I still regard as one of the very greatest of English novels. Yet every other book by Arnold Bennett seems to me to be as dull and thick in texture as the novels of H. G. Wells.

So the following afternoon we were prepared to find that we both liked and enjoyed Arnold Bennett, and that we were agreeably diverted by his handsome, dominant, and very French wife, whom he called Marguerite. As a person, apart from his work, I found him curiously interesting; but it did occur to me that the hypercritical might consider him—well, just "a bit of a bounder." Yet, notwithstanding the controlled stutter in his speech, I could have talked with him interminably, because of the scintillating audacity of his wit. When I told him I ranked *The Old Wives' Tale* among the six greatest English novels, he promptly rejoined, "Now, let's decide on the other five!" As our choice of the other five proved to be in agreement, he began to show an increasing appreciation of my compliment; the next morning I received a copy of *The Old Wives' Tale,* with an unusually charming inscription. He basked, as most of us do, in admiration; and because of

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my personal feeling for that one book, he exerted himself to be brilliant and sympathetic, and to be tactful, after the usual English manner, when I did not hear. But I felt with him, as I felt with every other British author I have ever met, with the possible exception of Joseph Conrad, who was not British, that he was trying to overcome an inherent condescension toward all things American, and, especially, toward American letters. I have never met a British writer who had ever really read American literature. One and all, they appeared to regard our prose or poetry as of a single piece. Wherever we went that summer, my friend Louise Collier Willcox, a brilliant woman who wrote able criticism, was addressed, respectfully, as "Ella Wheeler Wilcox." "If only," Louise wailed at last, in desperation, "I might enjoy Ella Wheeler's international reputation, without being held responsible for her verse!"

It is true, of course, that the pre-war English novels were superior to American novels; but, then, the English had had an immeasurably longer time in which to improve the pattern and build up a tradition. What annoyed me, however, was the calm assumption that America was there, chiefly, as a clearing-house for British mediocrity. A just preference for the greater English authors, I could understand perfectly, because I shared it. But I have always resented (though resented is, perhaps, too strong a word) the ease with which English men of letters have passed over to us any inferior novelist who was unable to make a living within the boundaries of Great Britain and her Colonies. During my stay in London a farsighted poet had confided to me that he had declined to write a preface for the uniform American edition of a British novelist who did rotten work, but was such a worthy character that he had to be looked after. "Of course, anything goes in America if you send it over with the right introduction," he observed shrewdly, "but it will be a sad day when you cease to act the fairy godmother over the water."

"It will be a sad day indeed for somebody," I assented.

In the early summer of 1914 we had not turned our friends into creditors by becoming the world's pawnbroker. True, the British might condescend, but that was more an international habit than a point of offense. Louise and I went here, there, and everywhere

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in England, and we liked all that we saw. She had grown up in England, and her brother, Price Collier, had left many devoted friends in London. Henry James, for one, spoke of him with deep affection. For, among authors great and small, we met Henry James, now and then, in the best houses. My dear old friend, and the friend of all the world, Mrs. W. K. Clifford, introduced us—or so I recall. Through her we received invitations to a reception given by the Ranee of Sarawak, and the three of us went together. To our great delight, we met Henry James almost as soon as we arrived, and the ever kind Mrs. Clifford drifted off, and left us to talk with him. Whenever we happened to meet him, he was, invariably, imposing, urbane, and delightful; but it was a dubious pleasure to have him begin one of his hesitating, polysyllabic, and endlessly discursive soliloquies. Unfortunately, we saw him only in crowds, and we were always pushed on and swept away by gathering streams of people, before he had found the exact right beginning, middle, and end of the involved sentences he was laboring to utter. He was, I felt, a kindly soul, but, even in those too brief meetings and too sudden partings, I felt also that there was a hollow ring somewhere. In looking back, I recall that I had seen him only in the houses of my wealthiest or my most important acquaintances. He had, I suspected, little use for the lowly; and when one industriously sifted his moral problems, there was little left but the smooth sands of decorum. Amiable as he was, he seemed to me (and this may have been entirely my fault) less real in substance than the great English novelists. Placed beside Hardy or Conrad, Henry James would have appeared, in spite of his size and his dignity, slightly foppish in manner. Some years later, when his letters were published, I searched in vain for an intimate note addressed either to the obscure in station or to the impecunious in circumstances. Nevertheless, he was a great artist; and I have no doubt that, at heart, stripped of his punctilios, he was a simple man. We were grateful for the pleasant words and pauses he wasted upon us.

Our opportunities for observation were unlimited that summer. My brother and my sister-in-law had lived for many years in London, and they had made hosts of friends. Their charming house in Berkeley Square was gay and bright with window-boxes in London

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before the First World War! In June 1914, Mayfair was a place of abundant bloom and fragrance. Mr. Walter H. Page had been one of my close friends ever since he had discovered *The Descendant*, and he and Mrs. Page made a homelike atmosphere in the Embassy in Grosvenor Square. We dined there frequently, and met many British and American authors. I have not forgotten an amusing lunch with lovely Mrs. Stillman, no longer young, but still a veiled Pre-Raphaelite beauty. "Oh, do come again," she said, when we left. "We love to have Americans. They make such a cheerful noise in the house."

As I look back, it appears incredible to me that we should have heard no rumor or prophecy of war with Germany. Everywhere we went, people were talking, anxiously, of a possible uprising in Ulster. Ireland held the attention of the British Empire, and there was such bitterness on both sides of that forgotten dispute. Though I talked with hundreds of well-informed men and women, not one of them alluded to the threatening war cloud over Europe.

We sailed for America the first of July—or it may have been toward the end of June. I cannot recall the date, but I remember that our boat was the German *Imperator*, and that our western voyage was unusually pleasant. Colonel Roosevelt was returning, as I recall, from his last African trip. The Walter Pages had asked him to look out for me, and a day or two after we sailed, he invited us to tea in "the imperial suite" which he occupied. "You must not think this magnificence is owing either to my affluence or to my merits," he remarked gaily. "The Hamburg-American line is still dazzled by the past glories of the Presidency."

I had not met him until this crossing, and though I was prepared for the vital charm of his manner, I had not expected his intuitive and unfailing tact. Never once, on the several occasions when I was with him, did he forget, even when he was speaking to another person, to turn slightly in my direction, or to place his voice at exactly the right pitch, neither too high nor too low. It was agreeable, of course, to find that he had read my books, and could discuss them convincingly; yet it was to his human magnetism, not to his dubious literary insight, that I surrendered. I had not wished to like him, for my particular abhorrence is the roving barbarian

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of the West who goes to Africa to kill animals. Had anyone told me I could ever really enjoy and like "a big game hunter," I should have laughed at the ignoble charge. Nevertheless, in spite of his savage methods with his lesser brethren of the plains and hills, I did like Colonel Roosevelt. What he needed, perhaps, to make him a great human being, as well as a great leader of men, was simply not to have been born a Roosevelt—or, failing this, another incarnation or two in some less fortunate lot. . . .

The nineteen twenties were rootless years in American literature. They began well, those years, with an earnest revolt from parochial smugness and village mores. But it was not long before the rebellion broke away, also, from reason, broke into a desultory guerilla uprising of the primitive, and into a final tremendous assault upon the intellect, along the popular front. The war had been the great liberator of instinct, and by the time the war was over, the new prophets of Freudian psychology were crying aloud to the multitude. All the bold young men, from the Middle West, were learning about America on Paris boulevards; and Bergson's theory of the *élan vital*, evolved, rather than formulated, in the early years of the century, was now filtering down into the lives of people who had never heard of Bergson, or indeed of any wiser philosophers. Sensation was so effortless, so unbridled, so direct in motive, and so democratic in method. Intellect, on the contrary, was a difficult master. Sensation was a lavish gift at birth, while only the minority, at any age, were endowed with the faculty of intellect. Moreover, it was flattering to discover that everybody possessed philosophy without knowing it. Monsieur Jourdain had become, overnight, the pattern of an age. The intellect, with its record of long service and of rigid systems, was condemned even by its former disciples. Sitting on the boulevards, the young men from the Middle West looked beyond the honest realism of *Main Street* and of *Babbitt* into the distorting mirror of America seen from

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abroad. One need not make an effort; one need not apply one's mind to a problem. Novelists and critics alike were tumbling, head foremost, into the soft modern theories. Nothing, any longer, was complicated. Everything was made easy, and intuition was sounder than reason. Acceleration, the mania of the period, set the pace of the movement. The more shallow and formless and flimsy a book appeared, the more certainly it would prove to be a work of effortless genius, predestined to reach a vast audience, which also was effortless. There was a wide rebellion against sentiment, but not against a sentimentality, so long at least as its object was estranged from standard rules of behavior. Gamblers in liquor and nymphomaniacs in green hats met and mingled and hilariously populated whole areas of American fiction. The cult of the hairy ape and the "mucker pose" came later, in the nineteen thirties, when the most casual reader of murder mysteries could infallibly detect the villain, as soon as there entered a character who had recently washed his neck and did not commit mayhem on the English language. The attraction of horror is a mental, or even an intellectual, excitement, but the fascination of the repulsive, so noticeable in contemporary writing, can spring only from some rotted substance within our civilization. . . .

Yet what a relief for tired minds! What a comfortable breaking down of invisible barriers! Sensation alone was enough. In sensation there is movement, speed, action, while reason, like Rodin's thinker, is confined, eternally, in an attitude of repose. . . .

When this book is published, if that ever happens, the name of Freud may have been long, or perhaps latterly, discredited. One thing we may be sure the time element will exact of the future, and that is an ultimate penalty for unbalanced fame. It may be that dreary Behaviorism will have triumphed. It may be that some newer prophet will have refuted all the present high-sounding theories. Nevertheless it is true that the novel, as a living force, if not as a work of art, owes an incalculable debt to what we call, mistakenly, the new psychology, to Freud, in his earlier interpretations, and more truly, I think, to Jung. These men are to be judged by their own work, not by the excesses of a secondary influence. For my part, though I was never a disciple, I was among the first,

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in the South, to perceive the invigorating effect of this fresh approach to experience. That the recoil went too far does not dishonor its leaders, for it is a law of our nature that every dynamic recoil should spring too far backward. Moderation has never yet engineered an explosion, and it requires an explosion to overturn a mountain of prejudice. Meanwhile, what had once been the profession of letters became, overnight, the practice of journalism. . . . And still I waited. . . .

My mind was thronging with ideas. My imagination was more vital and urgent than it had ever been. I felt that a tombstone had been lifted; but, even while I felt this, I knew that my health was lost, and forever. I had never been strong, except in will, and I knew that many of the past twenty years, though not all of them, had been wasted. Yet, in spite of the physical odds against me, I had begun to write my best books in the middle of the nineteen twenties. After *Barren Ground,* which I had gathered up, as a rich harvest, from the whole of my life, I had written and published two comedies of manners: *The Romantic Comedians* (surely, as many critics have said, a flawless work of its kind) and *They Stooped to Folly.* In the early nineteen thirties, I wrote *The Sheltered Life* and *Vein of Iron.* As a whole, these five novels represent, I feel, not only the best that was in me, but some of the best work that has been done in American fiction.

Although the primitive in art may be both interesting and impressive, as portrayed in American fiction it is conspicuous for dullness alone. Drab persons living drab lives, observed by drab minds and reported in drab writing—what other impression will be left in the memory? "An undistinguished victory," a critic, writing in 1935, has called this rising tide of uniformity. And he continues: "The outstanding characteristics of this literature seem to be that it deals only with the most ordinary people and things, and that it speaks a language scrupulously devoid of distinction. Because it is

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worded as the street talk of the uneducated it has a novel flavor, and because it is sordid it holds a gloomy fascination. Also, in its implication that nothing can be special or splendid, it is as depressing as the grave. . . . No critic would dare to be harsh with it, for it may be the literature of tomorrow. That makes it even more depressing."

Not that it matters. As long as one hated dullness and refused to be drab either in fact or in fiction, one might cast one's lot with a small but gallant band of irreconcilables. Mediocrity would always win by force of numbers, but it would win only more mediocrity. And this, also, would pass. Pollyanna and proletarian—were both protesting merely "the right of the ordinary to occupy the spotlight"? Yet, depressing or otherwise, we may make, even in the nineteen thirties, another choice. In the midst of a colorless flood there are lighthouses. Virginia Woolf and Santayana are still writing—and there are others. Within the present decade, perhaps within the present year, which is 1937, the greenness of the moron may become as little sought after as the ripeness of the wise. . . .

An unsentimental republic might have discovered the moron, as it discovered sex, with more understanding and less romance. But America has enjoyed the doubtful blessing of a single-track mind. We are able to accommodate, at a time, only one national hero; and we demand that that hero shall be uniform and invincible. As a literate people we are preoccupied, neither with the race nor the individual, but with the type. Yesterday, we romanticized the "tough guy"; today, we are romanticizing the under-privileged, tough or tender; tomorrow, we shall begin to romanticize the pure primitive.

The result of this tendency has been, of course, the general softening and weakening of our national fibre. One may share the generous wish that all mankind should inherit the world's beauty, without consenting to destroy that beauty because it is beyond the reach and the taste alike of the vast majority. For beauty, like ecstasy, has always been hostile to the commonplace. And the commonplace, under its popular label of the normal, has been the supreme authority for Homo sapiens since the days when he was probably arboreal.

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Penny-Wise

ROSE BURGUNDER

Slow morning, when winterluck's
Fallen, say (my grave-fine featherer):
Tarred the way

When I have sung from me willow and wing
Flung and stung from me fiddle of doves
Earth sorrow may shudder me, worn, on her string
Tarnish, tranquil me dry in her gloves
Till down be my sounder day

Yet charm
To the coppery autumnnight gale
Swung high at the starwasting tidewhite sail
Let me shine with my loves.

✪ ROSE BURGUNDER attended Wellesley College and later worked in the department of English of The Johns Hopkins University. This is among her first published poems.

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Conservation Is Not Enough

JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

MORALISTS OFTEN BLAME RACES AND NATIONS because they have never learned how to live and let live. In our time we seem to have been increasingly aware of how persistently and brutally they undertake to eliminate one another. But it is not only the members of his own kind that man seems to want to push off the earth. When he moves in, nearly everything else that lives suffers from his intrusion—sometimes because he wants the space it occupies and the food it eats, but often simply because when he sees a creature not of his kind or a man not of his race, his first impulse is "Kill it."

Even in the desert, where space is cheaper than in most places, the wild life grows scarcer and more secretive as the human population grows. The coyote howls farther and farther away. To almost everything except man, the smell of humanity is the most repulsive of all odors, the sight of man the most terrifying of all sights. Biologists call some animals *cryptozoic*, that is to say, "leading hidden lives." As the human population increases, most animals develop cryptozoic habits; the deer is a good example of this development. Even now there are more wild animals around than we realize. They see us when we do not see them; and it is because they have seen us that we do not see them. Albert Schweitzer remarks somewhere that we owe kindness even to an insect, when we can afford to show it, just because we ought to do something to make up for all the cruelties, necessary as well as unnecessary, which we have inflicted upon almost the whole of animate creation.

Probably not one man in ten is capable of understanding such moral and aesthetic considerations, much less of permitting his conduct to be guided by them. But perhaps twice as many, though

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still far from a majority, are beginning to realize that the reckless devastation of the earth has practical consequences. They are beginning to hear at least about "conservation," even though they are not even dimly aware of any connection between it and a large morality and are very unlikely to suppose that it does or could mean anything more than looking after their own welfare.

Hardly more than two generations ago, Americans first woke up to the fact that their land was not inexhaustible. Every year since then, more and more has been said, and at least a little more has been done, about "conserving resources," about "rational use," and about such reconstruction as seemed possible. Scientists have studied the problem, public works have been undertaken, laws passed. Yet everybody knows that the using up still goes on, perhaps not so fast nor so recklessly as once it did, but still at a steady pace. And there is nowhere that it goes on more nakedly, more persistently, or with a fuller realization of what is happening than in the desert regions where the margin to be used up is narrower.

First, more and more cattle were set to grazing and overgrazing land from which the scanty rainfall now ran off even more rapidly than before. Then more outrageously, large areas of desert shrub were uprooted to plant cotton and other crops which were watered by wells tapping underground pools of water, now demonstrably shrinking fast because they represent years of accumulation which can be exhausted even more rapidly than an oil well. Everyone knows that this water supply will give out before long—very soon, in fact, if the number of wells which draw on it continues to increase as it has been increasing. Soon dust bowls will be where was once a sparse but healthy desert; and man, having uprooted, slaughtered, or driven away everything which lived healthily and normally there, will himself either abandon the country or die.

To the question of why men will do or are permitted to do such things, there are many replies. Some speak of population pressures, while others more bluntly discuss unconquerable human greed. Some despair; some hope that more education and more public works will, in the long run, prove effective. But is there, perhaps, something more, something different, which is indispensable? Is there some missing link in the chain of education, law and public

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works? Is there something lacking without which none of these is sufficient?

After a lifetime spent in forestry, wild-life management and conservation of one kind or another, after such a lifetime during which he nevertheless saw his country slip two steps backward for every one it took forward, the late Aldo Leopold pondered the question and came up with an unusual answer which many people would dismiss as "sentimental" and be surprised to hear from a "practical" scientific man. He published his article originally in the *Journal of Forestry*, but it was reprinted in the posthumous volume *A Sand County Almanac*, where it was given a seemingly neutral but actually very significant title, "The Land Ethic."

This is a subtle and original essay, full of ideas never so clearly expressed before, and seminal in the sense that each might easily grow into a separate treatise. Yet the conclusion reached can be simply stated. Something *is* lacking; and because of that lack, education, law and public works fail to accomplish what they hope to accomplish. Without it, the high-minded impulse to educate, to legislate and to manage becomes as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And the thing which is missing is love, some feeling for, as well as some understanding of, the inclusive community of rocks and soils, plants and animals, of which we are a part.

It is not, to put Mr. Leopold's thoughts in different words, enough to be enlightenedly selfish in our dealings with the land. That means, of course, that it is not enough for the farmer to want to get the most out of his farm or for the lumberer to get the most out of his forest without considering agriculture and wood production as a whole, both now and in the future. It also means more than that; and enlightened selfishness cannot be the occasion of that something else. This is partly because enlightened selfishness cannot possibly be extended to include remote posterity—to children perhaps and to grandchildren possibly, but not much beyond, because the very idea of "self" cannot be stretched much further, and some purely ethical considerations must operate if anything does. And even that is not all. The wisest, the most enlightened, the most remotely long-seeing exploitation of resources is not enough,

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for the simple reason that the whole concept of exploitation is so false and so limited that in the end it will defeat itself and the earth will have been plundered, no matter how scientifically and farseeingly the plundering has been done.

To live healthily and successfully on the land, we must also live with it. We must be part not only of the human community, but of the whole community; we must acknowledge some sort of oneness not only with our neighbors, our countrymen and our civilization, but also with the natural as well as the man-made community. Ours is not only "one world" in the sense usually implied by that term; it is also "one earth." And without some acknowledgment of that fact, men can no more live successfully than they can if they refuse to admit the political and economic interdependency of the various sections of the civilized world. It is not a sentimental but a grimly literal fact that unless we share this terrestrial globe with creatures other than ourselves, we shall not be able to live on it for long.

You may, if you like, think of this as a moral law. But if you are skeptical about moral laws, you cannot escape the fact that this has its factual, scientific aspect which the science of ecology is every day making clearer as it demonstrates those more and more remote interdependences which, no matter how remote they are, are crucial even for us.

Before even the most obvious aspects of the balance of nature had been recognized, a greedy, self-centered mankind naively divided plants into the useful and the useless. In the same way it divided animals into those which were either "domestic" on the one hand or "game" on the other, and those which were called "vermin" and ought to be destroyed. That was the day when extermination of whole species was taken as a matter of course and random introductions, which usually proved to be either complete failures or all too successful, were everywhere being made. Pretty soon, however, it became evident enough that to rid the world of vermin and to stock it with nothing but useful organisms was at least not a simple task if you assume that "useful" means simply "immediately useful to man."

Even to this day the ideal nevertheless remains the same for

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most people. They may know, or at least they may have been told, that what looks like the useless is often remotely but demonstrably essential. Out in this desert country they may see the land being rendered useless by overuse. They may have heard that when the mountain lion is killed off, the deer multiply; that when the deer multiply, the new growth of trees and shrubs is eaten away; and that when the hills are denuded, a farm or a section of grazing land many miles away is washed into gullies and made incapable of supporting either man or any other of the large animals. They may even have heard how the wonderful new insecticides proved so effective that fish and birds died of starvation; that on at least one Pacific island, insects had to be reintroduced to pollinate the crops; that when you almost completely kill off a destructive pest, you run the risk of starving out everything which preys upon it and thus run the risk that the pest itself will stage an overwhelming comeback because its natural enemies are no more. Yet, knowing all this and much more, their dream is still the dream that an earth for the use of man alone can be created if only we learn more and scheme more effectively. They still hope that nature's scheme of checks and balances, which provides for a varied population, in which she stubbornly refuses to scheme only from man's point of view and cherishes the weeds and vermin as persistently as she cherishes him, can be replaced by a scheme of his own devising. Ultimately he hopes he can beat the game. But the more the ecologist learns, the less likely it seems that man can in the long run do anything of the sort.

"Nature's social union" is not the purely gentle thing which Burns imagined. In fact it is a balance, with all the stress and conflict which the word implies, and not a "social union" at all. But it is, nevertheless, a workable, seesawing balance. And when it ceases to seesaw, there is trouble ahead for whatever is on the end that stays up.

For every creature there is a paradox at the heart of the necessary "struggle for existence" and the paradox is simply this: Neither man nor any other animal can afford to triumph in that struggle too completely. Unconditional surrender is a self-defeating formula—even in the war against insect pests. In nature as elsewhere, "to the victor belong the spoils"—but for a time only. When there are no

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more spoils to be consumed, the victor dies. That is believed by some to be what happened to the dominant carnivorous dinosaurs many millions of years ago. They became too dominant, and presently there was nothing left to dominate—or to eat. It is certainly what happens to other creatures like the too-protected deer who multiply so successfully that their herds can no longer be fed; or, more spectacularly, like the lemmings who head desperately toward a new area to be exploited and end in the cold waters of a northern sea because the new area does not exist.

What is commonly called "conservation" will not work in the long run, because it is not really conservation at all but rather, disguised by its elaborate scheming, a more knowledgeable variation of the old idea of a world for man's use only. That idea is unrealizable. But how can man be persuaded to cherish any other ideal unless he can learn to take some interest and some delight in the beauty and variety of the world for its own sake, unless he can see a "value" in a flower blooming or an animal at play, unless he can see some "use" in things not useful?

In our society we pride ourselves upon having reached a point where we condemn an individual whose whole aim in life is to acquire material wealth for himself. But his vulgarity is only one step removed from that of a society which takes no thought for anything except increasing the material wealth of the community. In his usual extravagant way, Thoreau once said: "This curious world which we inhabit is more wonderful than it is convenient; more beautiful than it is useful; it is more to be admired than it is to be used." Perhaps that "more" is beyond what most people could or perhaps ought to be convinced of. But without some realization that "this curious world" is at least beautiful as well as useful, conservation is doomed. We must live for something besides making a living. If we do not permit the earth to produce beauty and joy, it will in the end not produce food either.

Here practical considerations and those which are commonly called "moral," "aesthetic" and even "sentimental" join hands. Yet even the enlightened Department of Agriculture is so far from being fully enlightened that it encourages the farmer to forget that

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his land can ever produce anything except crops and is fanatical to the point of advising him how to build fences so that a field may be plowed to the last inch without leaving even a narrow margin within which one of the wild flowers—many of which agriculture has nearly rendered extinct—may continue to remind him that the world is beautiful as well as useful. And that brings us around to another of Aldo Leopold's seminal ideas:

> Conservation still proceeds at a snail's pace; . . . the usual answer . . . is "more conservation". . . . But is it certain that only the *volume* of education needs stepping up? Is something lacking in *content* as well? . . . It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relation to land can exist without love, respect and admiration for land, and a high regard for its value. By value, I of course mean something far broader than mere economic value; I mean value in the philosophical sense.

Here in the West, as in the country at large, a war more or less concealed under the guise of a "conflict of interest" rages between the "practical" conservationist and the defenders of national parks, between cattlemen and lumberers on the one hand and "sentimentalists" on the other. The pressure to allow the hunter, the rancher or the woodcutter to invade the public domain is constant, and the plea is always that we should "use" what is assumed to be useless unless it is adding to material welfare. But unless somebody teaches love, there can be no ultimate protection to what is lusted after.

Any fully matured science of ecology will have to grapple with the fact that man, from the ecological point of view, is one of those animals which are in danger from a too successful participation in the struggle for existence. He has upset the balance of nature to a point where he has exterminated hundreds of other animals and has exhausted soils. Part of this he calls a demonstration of his intelligence and of the success which results from his use of it. Because of that intelligence he has learned how to exploit resources very thoroughly, and he is even beginning to learn how to redress the balance in certain minor ways. But he cannot keep indefinitely one step ahead of overcrowding and starvation; and from the standpoint of nature as a whole, he is both a threat to every other living thing

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and, therefore, a threat to himself also. If he were not so extravagantly successful, it would be better for nearly everything except man, and therefore possibly better in the longest run for him also. He has become the tyrant of the earth, the waster of its resources, the creator of the most prodigious imbalance in the natural order which has ever existed.

From a purely homocentric point of view, this may seem entirely proper. To most people it undoubtedly does. Is it not our proudest boast that we have learned how to "control nature"? Does not our dream of the future include a final emancipation from any dependence upon a natural balance and the substitution for it of some balance established by ourselves and in our exclusive interest? Is not that, in fact, what most people have in mind when they think of the final triumph of humanity?

Most would also go one step further and claim that we have every reason in experience to believe that this final triumph is possible. Has not all civilization been a closer and closer approach to it? Is not, indeed, the closeness of the approach the very measure of the degree of civilization? And if it is, then how can anyone even hint at the desirability of calling a halt? Could any halt possibly be called which would not be the beginning of a retreat back to the primitive?

Yet the fact remains that to all things there is a limit, that "progress" cannot continue indefinitely in one straight line. The growth of cities was, for instance, certainly essential to the development of civilization; but does that necessarily mean that cities should get greater and greater—that the bigger the city, the higher the civilization which it makes possible? Many would agree that it does not. Some might go on to suggest that the "control of nature" is itself something to which there are limits, that the control can never be absolute, that nature allows us only a certain length of rope, that in the long run it will appear that no complete emancipation from her rule is possible, that man's ability to "control nature" is something to which limits are set. If he insists upon trying to go beyond those limits, nature will have the last word.

The more completely we bring nature "under control," the more complicated our methods must become, the more disastrous

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the chain reaction set up by any failure of wisdom or watchfulness or technique. We are required to know more and more, and we are always threatened by the impossibility of achieving adequate knowledge, much less adequate wisdom and virtue.

Every increase in the complexity of organization has made the situation more precarious at the same time that it has increased our comfort, our wealth and our short-term safety. Until we learned to support a population far larger than we would have believed possible a century ago, there was no danger of general starvation, however disastrous and common local famines might have been. Although Malthus was certainly wrong in his estimates, it is by no means certain that he was wrong in his general principle. Until we increased the wealth of nations by linking them one with another, we were not exposed to the danger of a world-wide economic collapse. Until we learned how to "control" the atom, there was no danger that atomic phenomena would actually get out of control, and hence it is still not clear whether we are running the machines or the machines are running us. Thus we now have three tigers by the tail—the economic, the physical and the biological; and three tigers are three times as dangerous as one. We cannot let any of them go. But it is not certain that we can hang on to all of them indefinitely. Many a despot has discovered that it was just when his power seemed to have been made absolute that the revolution broke out. And it may be that just about three hundred years were necessary to expose the fallacy of the ideal born during the seventeenth century. Perhaps nature cannot really be controlled after all.

If one is prepared to admit that there is a limit to the extent to which we can exercise a biological control exclusively in our own interest, then it is certainly worth-while to ask how we might know when we are approaching that limit. It would, of course, be too easy to reply simply, "When man and society are obviously sick." Too many other explanations of the sickness can be given, and each can be made to seem more or less convincing; indeed, several of them may each be partially correct. But there is a criterion which it seems to me not wholly fanciful to apply. Might it not have something to do with nature's own great principle of "live and let live"?

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Might it not be that man's success as an organism is genuinely a success so long, but only so long, as it does not threaten the extinction of everything not useful to and absolutely controlled by him, so long as that success is not incompatible with the success of nature as the varied and free thing which she is, so long as, to some extent, man is prepared to share the earth with others?

And if by any chance that criterion is valid, then either one of two things is likely to happen. Either outraged nature will violently reassert herself and some catastrophe, perhaps the catastrophe brought about when more men are trying to live in our limited space than even their most advanced technology can make possible, will demonstrate the hollowness of man's supposed success; or man himself will learn in time to set a reasonable limit to his ambitions and accept the necessity of recognizing his position as that of the most highly evolved of living creatures, but not one which entitles him to assume that no others have a right to live unless they contribute directly to his material welfare.

But how can he learn to accept such a situation, to believe that it is right and proper, when the whole tendency of his thought and his interest carries him in a contrary direction? How can he learn to value and delight in a natural order larger than his own order? How can he come to accept, not sullenly but gladly, the necessity of sharing the earth?

As long ago as the seventeenth century—as long ago, that is, as the very time when the ambition to "control nature" in any large way was first coming to be formulated and embraced— a sort of answer to these questions was being given in theological terms. John Ray, one of the first great English biologists, formulated them in a book which was read for a hundred years; and they cut two ways, because what Ray had to say was directed against the egotism of man as expressed both by the old-fashioned theologians who thought that everything had been *made* for man's use and by the Baconians who assumed that he could at least *turn it* to that use.

"It is," Ray wrote, "a general received opinion, that all this visible world was created for Man; that Man is the End of Creation; as if there were no other end of any creature, but some way or other to be serviceable to man. . . . But though this be vulgarly received,

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yet wise men now-a-days think otherwise. Dr. Moore affirms, That creatures are made to enjoy themselves as well as to serve us." The greatest profit which we can get from the observation and study of other living things is, he went on to say, often not that we learn how to use them but that we may contemplate through them the wonders and the beauties of God's creation. What Ray was saying is precisely what Thoreau was restating in secularized form when he insisted that "this curious world which we inhabit . . . is more to be admired and enjoyed than it is to be used."

Since our age is not inclined to be interested in theological arguments, it is not likely to find Ray's exposition a sufficient reason for accepting gladly the continued existence on this earth of "useless" plants and animals occupying space which man might turn to his own immediate profit. He is more likely to make at least certain concessions in that direction as the result of absorbing what the ecologist has to say about the impossibility of maintaining a workable balance without a much more generous view of what is "useful" and what is not. But it is not certain that on that basis he will ever make quite enough concessions, and it *is* entirely certain that he will not make them happily, will not find life pleasanter just because he makes them, unless he can learn to love and to delight in the variety of nature.

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In Praise of Diversity

PHYLLIS MCGINLEY

SINCE this ingenious earth began
To shape itself from fire and rubble;
Since God invented man, and man
At once fell to, inventing trouble,
One virtue, one subversive grace
Has chiefly vexed the human race.

One whimsical beatitude,
Concocted for his gain and glory,
Has man most stoutly misconstrued
Of all the primal category—
Counting no blessing, but a flaw,
That Difference is the mortal law.

Adam, perhaps, while toiling late,
With life a book still strange to read in,
Saw his new world, how variegate,
And mourned, "It was not so in Eden,"
Confusing thus from the beginning
Unlikeness with original sinning.

And still the sons of Adam's clay
Labor in person or by proxy
At altering to a common way
The planet's holy heterodoxy.
Till now, so dogged is the breed,
Almost it seems that they succeed.

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One shrill, monotonous, level note
The human orchestra's reduced to.
Man casts his ballot, turns his coat,
Gets born, gets buried as he used to,
Makes war, makes love—but with a kind
Of masked and universal mind.

His good has no nuances. He
Doubts or believes with total passion.
Heretics choose for heresy
Whatever's the prevailing fashion.
Those wearing Tolerance for a label
Call other views intolerable.

"For or Against" 's the only rule.
Damned are the unconvinced, the floaters.
Now all must go to public school,
March with the League of Women Voters
Or else for safety get allied
With a unanimous Other Side.

There's white, there's black; no tint between.
Truth is a plane that was a prism.
All's Blanshard that's not Bishop Sheen.
All's treason that's not patriotism.
Faith, charity, hope—now all must fit
One pattern or its opposite.

Or so it seems. Yet who would dare
Deny that nature planned it other
When every freckled thrush can wear
A dapple various from his brother,
When each pale snowflake in the storm
Is false to some imagined norm?

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Recalling then what surely was
  The earliest bounty of Creation:
That not a blade among the grass
  But flaunts its difference with elation,
Let us devoutly take no blame
If similar does not mean the same.

And grateful for the wit to see
  Prospects through doors we cannot enter,
Ah! let us praise Diversity
  Which holds the world upon its center.
Praise *con amour* or *furioso*
The large, the little and the soso.

Rejoice that under cloud and star
  The planet's more than Maine or Texas.
Bless the delightful fact there are
  Twelve months, nine muses, and two sexes,
And infinite in earth's dominions
Arts, climates, wonders and opinions.

Praise ice and ember, sand and rock,
  Tiger and dove and ends and sources;
Space travellers, and who only walk
  Like mailmen round familiar courses;
Praise vintage grapes and tavern Grappas,
And bankers and Phi Beta Kappas;

Each in its moment justified,
  Praise knowledge, theory, second guesses;
That which must wither or abide;
  Prim men, and men like wildernesses;
And men of peace and men of mayhem
And pipers and the ones who pay 'em.

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Praise the disheveled, praise the sleek;
  Austerity and hearts-and-flowers;
People who turn the other cheek
  And extroverts who take cold showers;
Saints we can name a holy day for
And infidels whom saints can pray for.

Praise youth for pulling things apart,
  Toppling the idols, breaking leases;
Then from the upset apple-cart
  Praise oldsters picking up the pieces.
Praise wisdom, hard to be a friend to,
And folly one can condescend to.

Praise what conforms and what is odd,
  Remembering, if the weather worsens
Along the way, that even God
  Is said to be three separate Persons.
Then upright or upon the knee,
Praise Him that by His courtesy,
For all our prejudice and pains,
Diverse His Creature still remains.

✪ PHYLLIS McGINLEY is best known for her verse, which has appeared in *The New Yorker, Atlantic Monthly, Saturday Review* and a wide variety of other publications. "In Praise of Diversity" was first presented as the Phi Beta Kappa poem for the New York Delta chapter at Columbia University in June of 1953.

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Rembrandt: Educator of Humanity

PAUL LEROY

PERHAPS NO PAINTING HAS A HIGHER PLACE in the history of art than Rembrandt's "The Night Watch." Since it appeared in 1642, and especially in the last hundred years, so much has been written about it that further discussion may be unnecessary. The painting, however, is inexhaustibly rich and will probably give nourishment to thought for a long time. Therefore, I offer these remarks not simply to add to the voluminous literature on the subject, but in the hope that they will meet with critical attention.

When I first saw "The Night Watch" in 1931, it had already been cleaned once. The second cleaning seems to have been more thorough, removing not only the patina which was the work of time, but possibly something which came from the brush of Rembrandt, who seldom painted *alla prima*, but covered one coating of paint with another, painting sometimes almost in relief.

The commentators have scoured the painting as much as the restorers, the result being an enormous literature of experts in which many riddles are presented, but no solutions offered. The experts, and not the least important among them, have been disturbed principally by what they consider the inexplicable contradiction between the powerful sweep of the lively figures and the sober, prosaic subject: an outing of the city militia. "There dominates in the whole painting an uncommonly great movement, confusion and haste; certainly the Spartans of Leonidas did not go off to Thermopylae with more storm than these worthy citizens of Amsterdam left for target practice." Wilhelm Bode, the great connoisseur of art, said: "The choice and rendering of the theme goes beyond the subject of the picture [the representation of the Amsterdam militia] and thereby depreciates them. . . . The fabulous

✪ PAUL LEROY, architect, writer and painter, was born in Berlin and has lived in Paris since 1933. These comments on Rembrandt are taken from Mr. Leroy's unpublished memoirs, *The Topography of My Life*.

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light and the extraordinary animation are so captivating that one believes oneself to be a witness to a world historical event." Further on, Bode adds: " 'The Night Watch' appears to be the representation of a great moment in history. . . . The subject is not important enough for such dramatic treatment; in consequence, the painting takes on a somewhat theatrical effect." Here we have the learning of the learned, the learned who cannot see the forest for the trees and who "appreciate the sound of their own voices more than the singing of the angels."

If one were to follow this line of thought, one would have to conclude that, as always when doing a portrait, the painter took a good look at his commissioners, and injected them with some of his own artistic inspiration which then flowered out in color under his brush.

However, it is because a profound idea underlies and dominates the details of the subject that this representation of valiant citizens was elevated to so dramatic a pitch. While looking at the painting I was struck at once by the idea that Rembrandt had presented here nothing other than the notion of patriotism—with a realism that ignores the conventional ideas on the subject. This was of course not done deliberately. Many times before, artists had used military themes, producing good, simple work. Here these materials were penetrated by a deeper spirit, revealing a nobler idea of patriotism of which the artist was probably unconscious at first. What Rembrandt represents here is not the noisy chauvinism of the pretentious, but the healthy and sane activity of an armed community determined to perpetuate itself. The protection of one's own life and property involves the defense of one's family and one's heirs; it reaches out even further to include, first, friends and neighbors; then the home town; and finally those wider ties which destiny has linked with our history and which we call our native land, for this too has always been the ancestral and hereditary property of every citizen. The balanced well-being of the individual is all the more secure, the greater and the wider the base upon which it rests. On old Dutch ducats there appears the symbol of a man with a sheaf of arrows. A single arrow is easily broken, but bound up with others it helps to form a shaft of great resistance.

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Only anxious little people can believe that narrow egoism serves their interests; generous, far-seeing men unite themselves to their kind, giving and taking without envy or regret. Clear-sighted generosity serves the interests of all and becomes virtue—in this case, patriotism.

"The Night Watch" is no "theatrical" group representation of fellow-riflemen; it portrays no "world historical event." It is the highest artistic expression of love of country. If we examine the painting in this light, the many unsolved riddles disappear of themselves. The spontaneous animation in which each figure appears as a winged soldier of Leonidas is the first reaction of patriotism, the call from confusion and haste to efficacious order. "This one rushes out half dressed, that one is buttoning his jacket, another is putting on his gloves, still another is loading his gun. Somebody is beating the drum; somebody else is waving the flag." Everybody is doing something, whatever is necessary for the accomplishment of his special role.

In the middle of the picture, high and dark between two light areas, is placed the huge figure of the captain, the elected commanding officer. He advances, while behind him the followers begin to fall in line. His eyes express worry; but it seems as though already he espies, as from a distance, an element of stability in the tumult of the situation. Although absorbed in the thought of more remote things, he speaks to his lieutenant of matters closer to hand.

The lieutenant has ordinarily been considered the principal figure of the painting—so much so that the captain has been said to be, from an artistic point of view, a simple contrasting figure. The lieutenant "radiates a strong and blinding light, such as hits the eye when one looks at the sun. He is of a plastic corporeality which has perhaps never been equaled in the whole history of painting—a unique artistic figure."

Let us take a look at this short man, who grips his halberd with more caution than combativeness, clasping it at its most delicate spot, there where the threatening blade is attached to the wooden shaft. An Italian, the biographer of Bernini, remarked that "this weapon, which is only half an arm's length, is foreshortened in such a way that it appears to be of natural size from

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every angle." Why Rembrandt made this, as Luebke said, "stunted figure of the lieutenant with such virtuosity and emphasis that he should become the most impressive figure in the picture" remains a riddle for the art scholars who seek to explain it exclusively in terms of color composition.

If, however, one regards the bold step of the little man and his eyes turned toward the captain with an expression at once critical, intelligent and devoted, one can understand why he occupies the center of the painting. Just as he illuminates the picture artistically, it is through him that its meaning is revealed to us. The lieutenant is the intermediary, transmitting the directing thoughts of the commander-in-chief to his field troops and turning them into action. That Rembrandt placed this efficient middleman between the commander chosen from the elite and the followers coming from the free citizenry, that he made him the pivot, the turning point and the shining center of the picture, setting him in its very axis—all this bespeaks his enlightened and highly liberal view of man, the world and the essential nature of patriotism. That the name of an old folk hero of the Middle Ages, one of the leaders in the fight for the independence of Amsterdam, has been found engraved on the round collar of the lieutenant, adds weight to my thesis.

"The secondary center of light" has posed for Rembrandt's interpreters another riddle which is also much disputed and still unsolved. Here stands a child, a small girl bathed in light. None of the commentators knows exactly what to do with her. One of them speaks of her "lively, excited face"; another, of her "vague, shimmering spirituality, not yet individualized and still immersed in the elements." The French painter Fromentin wrote: "It is hard to know why this child who has neither form nor colour is here pressing between the legs of the riflemen." When director of the Museum of Rotterdam, Schmidt-Degener, pondered over the possibility that the child is the house porter's daughter; former Viennese Gallery director Glück considered her a camp follower; and Professor Neumann of Heidelberg, whose comprehensive book on Rembrandt I appreciate very highly, believes that "we would be faithful to the spirit of Rembrandt if we put an end to this endless

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debate over the role of the child, ceased to take her seriously and broke her up into elements of light and colour." One connoisseur who observes and explains the slightest hidden splash of color and who investigates with a magnifying glass every print of an etching if the needle seems to have deviated a little from the original line, explains the figure, which he himself considers dominant, as "a hardly motivated makeshift which the artist just happened to hit upon, because the figure of the child takes so little room."

The necessity of bringing a child into the picture is simply and compellingly explained by the idea of patriotism which implies the care of family and the faith in future generations. Nor does it appear an accident of composition that the standard-bearer lifts his hand with the flag directly over the child's head. If the child were not "pressing between the legs of the riflemen," it would be necessary to invoke the words of Heine: "In museums of natural history the whale is often missing from the fish pond." Later we will discuss another picture where children play as important a role as the child does here.

But let us consider "The Concord of the Land," the allegorical grisaille which exists only in the form of a sketch and which dates from a year before "The Night Watch." Here fighting horsemen, coats of arms and symbolic objects and figures of all sorts are assembled pell-mell in a highly romantic fashion. The scholars are agreed that in a certain sense this painting has a connection with "The Night Watch." Neumann says that the metallic luster of "The Night Watch" was the final fulfillment of the vision which had inspired this fantasy of knights. Schmidt-Degener had the idea that "The Concord of the Land" was the first form in which Rembrandt's imagination dressed the militia of "The Night Watch" in order to avoid the individual portraiture. I assume even more simply that the ideas which had inspired Rembrandt while he was working at "The Concord of the Land," but which had not been fully expressed at that moment, continued to turn in the artist's mind and here, on favorable soil, grew and ripened spontaneously.

The authorities come very close to the explanation adopted here, without however taking the last and decisive step. Personally I explain this less in terms of the problem itself than in terms of

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their profession. Art historians are concerned with such things as dates, historical contexts and influences. This sober study must at times become very flat and even humiliating, considering the greatness of the works which constitute its subject matter. Since even the most faithful and humble of servants sometimes advises and influences his great and moody master, in like fashion the art scholar often turns critic and solicitous teacher. To this end he familiarizes himself with the technique and the processes of art. He comes to believe that he possesses an even more comprehensive and many-sided knowledge of art than the artist himself, limited by the indulgence of his personal whims. The scholar finds a happy rest in the sure port of erudition, from which he sallies forth with judgments sanctioned by pleasing sentiments of his own importance. He does not hesitate to use his special vocabulary; and on such questions as color values, complementary colors and the fundamentals of composition, he says things which never so much as entered the mind of the creative artist.

On the other hand, he finds it beneath the dignity of the exact scientist to give himself over to speculations based on fleeting and subjective feelings. This would be unprofessional, a question of fantasy and scribbling which should be left to the outsiders and the dilettantes, as for example, myself. However, from time to time even a blind hen comes across a little kernel.

I have been impressed by an idea which, although not strictly demonstrable, is none the less extremely enticing. Neumann asks if Rembrandt "in his last years delivered himself from the exclusive preoccupation with the sensuous and sought harder after the heart and soul of things, the obsession with rich colours alone remaining." Here Neumann refers us to two of Rembrandt's later works, "The Jewish Bride" in Amsterdam and "The Family Group" in Braunschweig, both of which "derive their entire sensuality from strong colour effects."

This seems to me as confused as all the interpretations that have been given so far of the masterly Amsterdam picture. It shows a deeply thoughtful, bejeweled, almost too gorgeously dressed couple: a young, beautiful woman and a man ripe in age. The expression of each is very complex. The man draws the woman gently to him-

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self while the woman gives herself with a slight touch of reserve. He lays his right hand possessively on her heart; her lifted hand, which had probably been raised a moment before in defense, appears now to yield. The manly face expresses pensive solicitude and quiet decision. The breathing quiet of this embrace has the same irresistible intensity as the overpowering glow of the colors "which no words can paint." The scholars are not in agreement as to the proper designation for this couple. In addition to the usual title of "The Jewish Bride," five different ones have been proposed, of which none is convincingly appropriate. It has been debated whether the faces are expressive or not, "whether the two persons stand in a relationship of father and child, man and wife, or whether there is any relationship at all." Neumann believes that the painting is erotic in character. If this be the case, the eroticism is highly sublimated and spiritualized. Leaving aside the question of the proper designation of the couple, be it Biblical or other, it seems to me that this picture is a manifestation of one of the deepest and most spiritual meditations on marriage. It exhausts the subject just as completely as "The Night Watch" exhausts the subject of patriotism.

The poet Georg Hermann, who died a victim of the Nazi deportation program, wrote once that in order to shake off feelings of depression and disgust, he often rode fourth-class from Berlin to Braunschweig, spending his last penny. There, before this wonder of Rembrandt's last period, "The Family Group," he would find comfort and elation. In this picture the upright figure of the father stands in the dark background. Between him and the watchful mother, absorbed in the care of the youngest child who is sitting on her lap, the other bright and healthy children appear, like a living garland. The oldest of the small girls holds a basket by its handles, the youngest seeks for the mother's breast. This family seems, like birds in their nest, to rest comfortably and peacefully in the secure and happy familiarity of family union. The youngsters hold their heads high; the mother tends and feeds her flock; the father looks guardingly around.

Neumann says: "The remarkable thing is that this family painting does not fit in with the other late works of Rembrandt. The

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memory of 'The Night Watch' with the same flowing of colours and near absence of psychological expression springs to mind irresistibly." On this last point at least, Neumann is wrong. One sees the psychological expression of the painting if one interprets it together with "The Jewish Bride" and "The Night Watch" as a representation of the ancient cultural foundations of society: marriage, family and country, the germs from which perhaps one day a larger human community may grow.

Can it be a simple coincidence that it was just in these three paintings that Rembrandt's brush should have kindled the bright flames of his colors? Certainly it was not a calculated intention; the atmosphere and the grandeur of these themes with all their far-reaching implications were such as to ignite each spark of this fiery soul and to make it shine like a lighthouse in the distance. Thus does Rembrandt become an educator. He does not urge us to return "to the days of characterless adolescence," of medieval soul-ghettos, of mysticism, of suffocating incense, or of brain-reeling, pseudo-scientific nonsense. On the contrary, he inspires us to search with clear-minded foresight for the highest of ideals—personal freedom founded on human co-operation. The glowing light which Rembrandt kindled with his brush was created by a human hand seeking order in chaos, shaping unformed matter and gauging it with the stamp of knowledge.

Rembrandt made sketches in the style of Leonardo and Raphael; he studied and collected prints of the Italian masters, among them even the obscene drawings of Raphael. He accepted orders from Messina for pictures of the Apostles. He borrowed from Renaissance humanism as much as he needed and blended it with his own north-European humanity, rendering thereby his representation of man and the world just and equitable; that is to say, he succeeded in rendering the exterior expression of the innermost sentiments with indulgence and good will. He painted the ostentatious rich and the tattered derelicts of society with an equal love; so also scenes from the New Testament, the Old Testament and from ancient mythology, the saints of the Church and those Jews in whose midst he lived, with whom he was on close terms and whom he painted ceaselessly. Perhaps, as Neumann remarked in passing,

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"he saw most easily into this people whose hearts, laid bare by a thousand years of misfortune and suffering, reveal the depth of human nature." Neumann unrolls in his book a lively picture of the contradictory religious currents existing side by side in the Holland of Rembrandt's time, rationalism and mysticism whirled together. Rosicrucians, cabalists, atheists and freethinkers, breathing the spirit of the Italian Renaissance, are all the painter's contemporaries. He himself is supposed to have been—proof is lacking—a Mennonite. However, this sect leaves such an extraordinary freedom to its members that even the unbelievers and the indifferent are able to find an undisturbed asylum in its ranks.

This makes it all the more difficult to understand why Neumann insists upon classing Rembrandt with the "mystically illuminated," why he compares him to the mystic Jacob Boehme and almost goes so far as to suspect him of being an alchemist. Max Weber considers Rembrandt "the greatest Christian apostle in the field of art," and Kolloff endows him with "a touch of Jewry." Baldinucci permits him to deny the divinity of Christ, and Georg Simmel wanted to save the "transcendence of Rembrandt's religious art." The great English painter Reynolds on the other hand is of the opinion that the entire Dutch school's painting appealed only to the sight, being a sort of technical grammar without any deeper meaning. His countryman Ruskin, the pope of the Pre-Raphaelite movement which rounded out the lean figures of the so-called Nazarene school of German-Roman painters with a lustrous and elegant flow of classical curves and colors, goes even further. In his opinion all modern art has been so thoroughly penetrated by a spirit of rationalism as to drive out all religious content. He says that the painting in which Rembrandt holds Saskia on his knee, the uplifted tumbler in his free hand, proves that the ideals of faith and hope had been lost. He thought that an art such as Rembrandt's was necessarily common and godless and that the Dutch were a race of painter-beasts, clever but without any feeling. The Frenchman Fromentin, on the contrary, explains Rembrandt as an "ideologist, a spiritualist and a metaphysician."

A normal eye, unprotected by horn-rimmed glasses, can see beyond this confusion of opinions: Rembrandt, who was one of

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the world's greatest geniuses in the field of art, could not have been imprisoned in a narrow world of ideas. His great personality cannot be judged in terms of ready-made descriptive labels. Rembrandt is his own measure. Spiritual freedom and clear-sightedness raise him beyond these diverse religious attitudes which all lead finally to some form or another of mysticism. It is perfectly clear that mysticism was completely foreign to his nature, especially if one studies the self-portraits in which every phase of his life is recorded. The last in the Carstanjen collection is particularly revealing. The man who can look at himself and paint his own portrait in such a fashion has not fallen into metaphysical irrationalism. He is a critical realist and also a friend of man, tolerant toward every race and religion, from which he takes what he needs for the life of his art. He is beyond clericalism and sectarian prejudices. He is quite simply a free man, a model, an educator. Of course, this or a similar interpretation means nothing at all to the priestly caste of aestheticians who take Rembrandt for an oracle and hide him in clouds of damp and sulfurous twaddle. Rembrandt, who wore and painted the most costly and magnificent costumes, is said to belong to the Mennonites to whom this luxury is forbidden and whose garb is of the greatest simplicity and modesty. It appears that once he covered over the entire figure of a Cleopatra the better to set off the shining beauty of a huge pearl. This, however, must by no means be taken as evidence of ordinary sensuality. It must, on the contrary, have a spiritual signification. The glitter of the jewels which he painted was thus made part of a "mystical vision" like the allegorical "rubies, emeralds and carbuncles" which enchanted the theosophical shoemaker Jacob Boehme. "His art grew in life and depth through mystical illuminations; he became a mystic," says Neumann. This interpretation leaves a great mystery. How could such a man have been a tireless and patient seeker after truth? Instead of using the facts to throw a little light on the problem, one has added arbitrarily to the confusion, reducing everything to the "hylozoic, primordial chaos" of Boehme. For the alchemists this curious expression represents the philosopher's stone. Modern wisdom has made it into an idol whose pious veneration by the aristocracy of the learned appears every bit as fashionable as the attend-

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ance at mass or other church service by the upper crust of society.

Rembrandt's chiaroscuro is neither a mystical medley of heavenly light and doleful lamentations in this vale of tears, nor a troubled metaphysical compound of godly illumination shining in the dark labyrinth of our earthly vicissitudes. It is rather like the primitive chaos out of which the master touch of genius shapes both light and darkness. The human creator seeks to make a universe out of chaos; the painter practices a higher art: he turns the vague and anxious dread of life into quiet repose. The spectator who knows how to appreciate this art will accept gratefully his share of consolation and joy.

There is still another way which leads to this goal, a steeper and harder way with vistas of its own. This is the way of the clear-sighted, tough-minded truth seeker. He knows well that his work is only piecemeal, but he knows also that every step which brings him nearer to his unattainable goal offers a still richer reward than the soothing and beautiful lies of art. He, too, looks for light in the darkness, not the dazzling glow of beauty which permits us to forget the obscurity, but rather the light of truth which enables us to measure and to judge all things. Rembrandt made his way along this deserted road too. It is incorrect to attribute his sketching of the so-called "Doctor Faustus" to alchemistic irrationalism. The distinguished figure of a scholar, cautious and composed, with the penetrating gaze of the sober researcher, observes a light-phenomenon in which magical and religious signs are seen. Critically, pen in hand, the attentive researcher waits to see what will emerge from this flickering form bubbling up out of the surrounding darkness and casting its rays upon him. This phenomenon makes its appearance in the light of day and is no longer the object of belief or superstition. It will be explained as the experimental intellect of man sees fit to explain it.

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A Glimpse of Incomprehensibles

GEORGE W. CORNER

ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING PROJECTS now under way at our laboratory is an experimental study of the behavior of uterine muscle. Dedicated as we are to the study of embryology, we are bound to consider the environment in which the embryo lives, and in particular that remarkable muscular organ, the uterus, in which every one has his first home. A visitor who steps into the rooms of Dr. Arpad Csapo, the leader of this particular research, sees him facing a mass of apparatus, tubing and wires, all of which is focused upon a small vial housing a strip of rabbit's uterus, three centimeters long. This bit of living tissue is kept at body temperature in physiological salt solution. It is supplied with oxygen and with energy in the form of dextrose. Its environment is thus made as much as possible like that within the intact animal. One end of the strip is fastened to a lever, so that when it contracts, as any involuntary muscle will do of its own accord when so prepared, its rhythmic contractions are recorded on a drum. Watching the lever move up and down, watching the muscle itself shorten and then relax, the fascinated observer realizes with a start that what he is watching is an engine, as much an engine as those which run our motorcars. Like them it has its own firing system by which the energy on which it operates is turned into mechanical work by a kind of explosion. Dr. Csapo chooses to supplant this natural "spark-plug" mechanism by mild electrical shocks from a mechanical timer; thus gaining somewhat smoother timing, he finds that he is indeed running an engine in the most literal sense. The experiment becomes quantitative, like an engineer's test of any steam or gasoline engine. The energetics of operation can be calculated. The work done is precisely related to the amount of contractile

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protein in the sample and of the fuel used. The strength of the contractions (i.e., isometric tension) can be predicted from the size and physiological state of the muscle sample, and Dr. Csapo has even found a way, by the use of the ovarian hormones, to alter the mechanical performance in much the same way as when the pressure of steam supplied to a steam engine or the rate of carburetion of a gasoline motor is changed.

Thus far I have spoken only of isolated muscle tissue under fully controlled laboratory conditions; but we know also from very recent experiments by Dr. Brenda Schofield that the whole uterus, in the rabbit's body, operates on the same principle and would behave as uniformly except that it is affected by other complex regulatory factors, such as the nervous system and the ovarian hormones.

The nerves of the uterus apparently come into play chiefly for regulatory purposes on critical occasions; that is to say, the impulses they carry co-ordinate one part of the uterus with another when the fertilized eggs are to be received and accurately positioned in the uterus, and again when the infants are to be delivered. These nerve impulses are known to consist of ionic reactions; they and the blood flow that transports carbohydrate fuel to the uterus, in fact all the operative controls, are physico-chemical processes. The whole organ must be regarded as a mechanism, no less than the isolated strip, although the intact uterus *in situ* is of course a more complicated mechanism and less uniform in its activity under experimental observation.

The investigator, silently for hours watching and controlling these experiments, inevitably asks himself, Is not then the whole rabbit also a mechanism, and if so, why not the man who watches? His muscles and nerves and brain that devised the experiment, his curiosity that asked the questions, the energy that drives him to answer them—is not all this the product of biochemical reactions under fixed laws of the physical world?

This is an old question, as old as philosophy itself, to which in the past an answer has often been given one way or the other by scientist or theologian. It was put again to me, not long ago, by one of America's eminent scholars. This friend of mine, a professor of literature, has a doctor son who works alongside of us; perhaps it

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was the younger man's enthusiastic talk of biophysics that disturbed the father. Perhaps also the professor, who is expert in the history of eighteenth-century thought, is still irked by the brash statements of mechanistic philosophy given two centuries ago by men like La Mettrie, author of books entitled *Man a Machine* and *Natural History of the Soul*. At any rate, he asked me in all seriousness whether the advance of science and particularly of human biology does not threaten to reduce all human activity to physico-chemical terms and thus to destroy the humanities and do away before long with the arts and all learning, except physics.

In reply to the professor's question, I say in the first place that we anatomists, physiologists and biochemists are for practical reasons bound to work on the assumption that the animals and parts of animals we study are indeed mechanisms. We must try as hard as we can to bring all animal and human behavior under observation and measurement. If the premature acceptance of non-physical "vitalistic" forces leads us to abandon physical and chemical investigation, we shall only wander in a no man's land of conjecture.

In the second place, the progress of these sciences brings into the realm of materiality much that was once thought to be immaterial. One example of this will suffice. The phenomenon of vision was a great enigma to the ancients. Aristotle himself cried out in wonderment, "Who would believe that so small a space [as the eye] could contain the images of all the universe? What skill can penetrate such a wonderful process? This it is that leads human discourse to the consideration of things divine!" Since then we have marched steadily toward understanding human seeing as a physical and chemical activity. In Aristotle's time and in the Middle Ages, all existing knowledge was encompassed in a vague concept of the eye as the lantern of the soul. What we now call the lens was believed to be the central receptor of things seen, passing visual images inward to the soul itself. That the eye is a camera working on strict optical principles, and the retina its photoreceptor, became clear in the seventeenth century. In another hundred years, discovery of the optic nerve-fibers made known that the brain is involved in the process of vision. The actual areas of the brain concerned in seeing, and the exact pathways from the retina to the

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cortex, were worked out in the nineteenth century; the biochemistry and biophysics of nerve conduction are the work of our own age. In view of all this progress toward a physico-chemical concept of the visual process from eye to brain cortex, should the biologist be thought too daring if he now expects that biophysics will one day explain the conversion of cortical optic responses into conscious thought, and trace all the channels over which they reverberate throughout the body, causing the seer to stare or tremble or soar in ecstasy at what he sees?

We are indeed daring, I admit, when we predict that consciousness will be explainable in physico-chemical terms, but nowadays even those who doubt the possibility of such understanding usually base their doubts not on grounds of vitalism or of piety, but on a materialistic argument involving a sort of uncertainty principle which states that a thinking machine is necessarily incapable of perceiving how it thinks.

Meanwhile, experimenters are attacking the citadel of the mind, the subconscious mind at least, by the study, for example, of conditioned reflexes. A clear description of one such investigation appeared in a recent number of the *Scientific American*, in an article by Professor Liddell of Cornell University on his experimental production of anxiety-states in sheep and goats. By the simplest physical means, namely the continuous administration of slight painless electrical shocks on a monotonously regular schedule, he produced long-continued disorders of emotional behavior. Again, anyone who has observed the effect on human patients of drugs like desoxyamphetamine has seen how high-level mental phenomena, that is to say, elaborate apprehensions, conscious fears, and disorders of judgment, can be altered for the time being by a physical agent that can only be hastening or retarding, somewhere in the brain, some such purely biophysical action as the passage of ions across the borders of specific nerve cells.

Rather, however, than to carry this line of argument for the material nature of human thought to the length of saying outright, with La Mettrie, that man is a machine and even his highest activities are the product of physical reactions, let us go back and look again at the small living mechanism with which we started, the

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muscle strip studied by my colleague. Simple as it seems, this little engine is actually much more complicated than a man-made motor. It is not made of metal, but mostly of complex, unstable proteins. It is not able to burn ordinary hydrocarbons like wood, coal or oil, but only one very special and elaborate substance, adenosine triphosphate. It has to make this fuel for itself from sugar brought by the blood stream, stepping up the chemical structure through at least a dozen enzyme processes until it has built what it can burn. It is not controlled by a throttle but by ion-movements across a semi-permeable barrier membrane. I have by no means stated all the complexities; if we could look inside this muscle when in action, we would see in each of its microscopic cells more ions, atoms, molecules and larger aggregates going systematically about their business than all the people and automobiles in the city of Philadelphia. I once made a calculation that one cell of an endocrine gland, the corpus luteum, produces in one day more than a thousand billion molecules of its internal secretion.

The muscle machine is not only very complex; it is also very unstable. It runs well only within a narrow range of temperature; 60 degrees centigrade will cook it; one crystal of cyanide will stop it quicker than a monkey wrench in a crankcase. The protein molecules of which it is chiefly composed are held in a precarious state of teetering equilibrium by interacting tensions, like the gymnasts in a human pyramid. Such is life at the level of the cell. At the level of the organs—heart, lungs, liver—and at the level of the body, life consists of the interaction of such complex and unstable, therefore sensitive, tissues and their co-ordination by equally complex and unstable tissues such as nerves and blood vessels. At the level of the mind, the structure in which thinking is done is no less complicated. Dr. Karl Lashley, in a pioneering essay "In Search of the Engram," on the physiological basis of learning, closely estimated the number of nerve cells in the visual apparatus of the white rat from retina to brain cortex, and got a total of thirteen millions. With these neurones the rat is able to retain (says Lashley) scores, perhaps hundreds of visual habits involving discrimination of complex figures. The rhesus monkey has about a hundred times as many visual neurones; man, we may conjecture,

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a thousand times thirteen millions. A student reading his textbooks instantly distinguishes any one of ten thousand patterns presented by the printed words before him.

This enormous, overwhelming, almost inconceivable complexity of the human structure and mental function forces us, if we are to be materialists, into materialism of a new sort. When La Mettrie said that man is a machine, a machine to him meant something like a clock or the primitive Newcomen steam engine. He must have realized that the human machine is more complicated than that, but still it was to him figuratively a thing of cogs and levers. If, however, I say that man is a machine, I have to think of an apparatus much more complicated than the biggest electronic computing machine, and also much less stable, much more sensitive than any piece of man-made automatic hardware. The difference between old and new concepts of the living machine is so great, so fundamental that twentieth-century scientific materialism is bound to be very different from that of the past. My variety of it, you may say when I finish, is not materialism at all.

Mention of electronic calculating machines brings us to the most recent aspect of mechanistic thought, the kind of analysis called cybernetics. This stems from the observation of certain similarities between electronic circuits and the structure and functioning of the nervous system. Not only is the transmission of the nerve impulse analogous to the electric current; not only are the synapses or nerve junctions analogous to electrical connections, and the primary reflex arc merely a doorbell circuit; more than that, something much like feed-back wiring and regenerative circuits can be seen in the brain, suggesting the existence of stages of amplification like those of a radio set. On the contrary, some of the mental activities of men and animals can be imitated by machines built on these principles: for example, simple remembering, simple discriminations, even choice between alternatives simply presented. Some of these operations are fairly impressive. Everyone has heard what the great computing machines can do, for example, in solving complicated differential equations in a fraction of a second. When a wartime committee under my direction was studying devices for the blind, the engineer Zworykin of the Radio Corporation of America

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built us a machine that recognizes the individual letters of a printed alphabet and calls them off vocally. Another less serious engineer made a mechanical bug that knows when it is hungry for more juice in its little battery, trots off to the proper socket, connects itself and gets a recharge. If there is radio interference in the neighborhood, I suppose the gadget might develop a simple sort of nervous prostration like Professor Liddell's sheep and goats.

This jest of mine reflects the feeling of conservative anatomists and physiologists that cybernetic concepts fall far short of explaining the workings of the nervous system, partly, I admit, because we have by no means worked out a complete description of the animal machine for engineers to imitate. There are a lot of circuits and connections still to be traced. Yet the parallel onward march of neurology, biophysics and electronic engineering makes it probable that all the operations of the animal mind result from the flow of electrical charges, that is to say, the transfer of ions in the cells of the body. When an experimenter produces neurosis in the sheep, or (to take a more agreeable example) when a hunting dog is conditioned to stand and point to a pheasant, I have no difficulty in supposing that the whole conditioning process occurs entirely on the material level. If asked whether I suppose this to be true also of more complex mental performances involving intricate choice of alternatives on the basis of a large stock of stored information, say, a fullback running through a broken field or Shakespeare writing a sonnet, I have to say I do not know. Even what I just said about the hunting dog is a hypothesis. We biologists are bound to work on such hypotheses, even if we do not expect that a good sonnet will ever be written by a man-made machine.

But suppose, just for the argument, that it is so, that all the higher activities of the mind—all that raises man above the unreflective beast and leads him to create arts, sciences and humane learning—suppose that this is entirely the result of ionic shifts in our cells for which we may some day calculate the equations: what then? Do we scrap our libraries and colleges? Is my humanist friend whose question started me on this essay to discontinue teaching the history of literature and philosophy?

What I now reply is not the utterance of mystics or metaphysi-

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cians; it is the word of the histologist looking up from his microscope, the physiologist from his oscillograph. We see that the human thinking mechanism, if it is a mechanism, is utterly complex and multifariously sensitive beyond any conceivable instrument of metal and glass, and therefore its individual reactions will always be in large part unpredictable. Let me reinforce this statement by quoting again Karl Lashley, one of the most thoughtful of our neuropsychological experimenters. In his essay on the mechanism of learning, he writes:

> The trace of any activity is not an isolated connection between sensory and motor elements. It is tied in with the whole complex of spacial and temporal axes of nervous activity. The space and time coordinates can, I believe, be maintained by . . . rhythmic discharges which pervade the entire brain, influencing the organization of activity anywhere. Within a functional area the cells acquire the capacity to react in certain definite patterns. . . . The characteristics of the nervous network are such that when it is subjected to any pattern of excitation, it may develop a pattern of activity, reduplicated throughout an entire functional area by spread of excitations. . . . All the cells of the brain must be in almost constant activity, either firing or actively inhibited. . . . The learning process must consist of the attunement of the elements of a complex system in such a way that a particular combination of cells responds more readily than before the experience.

The mental patterns of learning and of directed response, of which Lashley writes, are set up in an apparatus which in man consists of billions of neurones, interconnected through innumerable channels. The organ in which these patterns are stored is subject to excitation from outside through five senses, each of them so critically sensitive that a touch, a whiff of odor can suddenly revive a whole chapter of the past—one chapter for me, another for you; one syllable heard may set off a torrent of emotion or activity. The mechanism is also sensitive to stimulation from within itself by stored memories, by organic sensations, by local subthreshold fluctuations of physical states throughout the body. Surgeons sometimes have an opportunity to stimulate the brain directly, in a patient who is conscious and co-operative during an operation under local anesthesia. Dr. Wilder Penfield thus found that elec-

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trical stimulation at a single point of the cortex can elicit elaborate memories of things seen or heard. A big electronic computer has a bank of keys like a pipe organ; who can estimate the number of keys to the human mind, within the body and on the surface of its sensorium, through which impulses are thrown into one circuit or another, to start who knows how many oscillations in the next circuit, and the next? Nervous and mental operations involve, however, more than mere spread and flow of impulses. There are slowing and blocking resistors; there are shunts and diversions. There are circuits that operate to cut out other circuits, or to cut them in, or steady their oscillations. The elements of these circuits, moreover, are not copper wires, metal switches and electronic tubes. The conducting threads, as well as the whole organism they interconnect, are made up of elaborate and unstable chemical substances, very critically responsive to changing conditions.

Their hookup into a vast network is also unstable and critically responsive. Integration of an organism so that this multiplex system will behave in a measurably constant way calls for all sorts of internal controls—the homeostatic regulators that Walter Cannon wrote about—and in higher animals on the behavioral level it demands intensive habit formation by experience, training and education. Even when such patterning of response is well established, the richness of internal communication is so great that a small resistance here, a sudden surge of mental current there, in the network may channel the impulses in a new direction.

It is these uncertainties that create individual differences in behavior and capacity. They direct and redirect for good or bad whatever is passing through our heads. They must in some way account for the mystery of original thinking and artistic composition. They will forever keep education from being a routine business.

The complexity of human thought and behavior is of course nothing new; my point is that science has caught up with that fact and now perceives that the bodily mechanism possesses a similar order of complexity and therefore may be assumed capable of conducting very complex and subtle operations. A recent experiment illustrates perfectly what I am trying to say. One subject of Liddell's investigation at Cornell was a nursling goat, three weeks old.

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When it was given the routine treatment of painless but unceasingly recurrent electric shocks, it developed the usual neurosis. This animal was one of twins. The other of the pair of kids was subjected to the same experimental treatment, except that its mother was left with it in the large stall where it lived during the period of exposure to emotional trauma. This second kid did not become neurotic at all. The presence of its mother had done something inside the little animal that kept its nerves from jangling. If its unprotected brother's neurosis was a mechanistic disturbance, from which the twin was protected by the comforting presence of a mother, then—at least in the case of these particular goats, under experiment by Liddell in a barn near Cayuga Lake—it looks as if the benefit afforded by the nanny's presence was also a biophysical phenomenon. But the scientist must admit that a mechanism that needs its mother is indeed a special kind of mechanism.

By such means as this, by the intercommunication of companionship, of mood, of sympathy and solace, individuals are integrated into still more complex organizations of flock and herd, family, tribe and race. In this gift of communication, living organisms greatly excel the machines. We have all been astonished by Von Frisch's discovery of the signal-language of honeybees. Certain man-made automatic control systems perhaps approach that achievement of the bees; but at a higher level how infinitely varied is the ability of human beings to transmit complex eddies of thought and emotion to one another!

Thus we have just about reached a truce in the old quarrel between vitalism and mechanism. Both sides perceive that whatever our respective hypotheses may be about the way things work inside us, we too are creatures subject to repeated shocks, born to trouble, yet capable of adjustment. More complexly organized even than other creatures, we can go beyond mere mental adjustment, on to new accomplishments and achievements; but all the more do we need the influences that come through human kinship and the experience of our race, all that is learned at a mother's knee and at the feet of alma mater, and in the world of arts and letters.

When I mentioned the experiments at Cayuga Lake, some readers may have thought of a shepherd who once tended flocks beside

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another inland sea, who experienced in his own person both frustration and adjustment, and who being a poet saw the parallel between his own trials and joys and those of his sheep. Lifting his eyes to heaven, he said as of a greater Shepherd, "He leadeth me beside the still waters, He restoreth my soul." I have not chosen to carry, here, my concept of the new mechanistics into the field of religion. Science and theology tend to get heavy-handed with each other when discussing this subject. La Mettrie was banished and his books were burned because of his materialism. I think I do not risk any such fate because of mine. The biologist realizes that the mechanism is so sensitive to outward influences, and to stimuli so subtle that current science is not able to define the limits of its sensitivity; and therefore, while in the laboratory he must base his own working hypothesis upon what he can see and measure, he will not in the present state of knowledge banish from the company of scholars any man whose personal hypothesis, or faith, takes him all the way with the highhearted old scientific humanist Sir Thomas Browne, who bade us, "Have a glimpse of incomprehensibles; and thoughts of things which thoughts but tenderly touch. Lodge immaterials in thy head; ascend into invisibles; fill thy spirit with spirituals, with the mysteries of faith, the magnalities of religion, and thy life with the honour of God."

Biophysics will not soon measure the wave length of exaltation like that; but even so, we shall go on exploring the body and brain. Let not my learned friend be troubled; if and when all the circuits are traced, when the last equation is written for the ionic movements that run the works in eye, ear, nerve, muscle and viscera, the mechanism, however fully we then understand it, will still be complexly excitable and still sensitive to all the subtleties of a subtle universe. New combinations of neurones will go on being formed. Individuals will still be unpredictable. Patterns of behavior will still have to be established by training and education. Human history will not cease being made nor poetry to be written. If all the nerve cells are to be kept firing in the most effective sequence, some of the keys of the human mechanism will still have to be operated by the professors of languages and literature, by artists and by philosophers.

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On First Looking into America

IAN WILSON

THERE IS NO NATION, to my knowledge, more addicted to the pastime of self-analysis, both individually and collectively, than the American. In support of this argument one may point, on the one hand, to the dominant position attained by the psychiatrist in a community whose members find it increasingly more difficult to adjust to the precipitate hustle of the machine age that they have created; and, on the other, to the avidity with which they devour whatever literature purports to show them as they really are. Whether this is due to the vanity of an actor collecting press clippings or to a sincere belief that the gift "to see oursels as others see us" will "frae monie a blunder free us," I do not feel disposed to say. But, for whatever reason, the market for comment on the American way of life is seemingly inexhaustible, and—this being an economy devoted to the laws of supply and demand—so long as it lasts, just so long will there be a Bryce or Brogan, a de Tocqueville or Maurois. In seeking to trade on this trait by setting down the most outstanding of my two months' impressions, my sole justification is that I have been able to combine nearness of observation with a certain remoteness of association; for I cannot yet speak of Americans as "we": they are still what Carson McCullers might call the "you" of me.

It may be, as Jacques Barzun claims, that the best way to see America is from a lower berth about two in the morning—best, that is, for one who seeks to capture the true sense of vastness in the land as nature shaped it. But to toss the new immigrant into the deep end of such a primeval pool would be an awesome, perhaps even a shattering experience. His first requirement in his new life is to equilibrate himself, to achieve virtually a new philosophy;

✪ An arts graduate of Oxford, IAN WILSON held an administrative post in a British chemical company before coming to America this spring. His article "Letter from Britain" appeared in the Winter, 1950-1951 issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

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and that can only come from the gradual approach. So it is probably better that the first sights he sees should be the already familiar landmarks of the Statue of Liberty and the Manhattan skyline: they may be signposts on a new road, but they also leave the newcomer with a sense of "I-have-been-here-before." Yet, paradoxically, it is this very sense of superficial familiarity, this feeling of sameness, born of his newspaper-reading and visits to the local cinema, that is his most besetting danger in the process of equilibration. Because some landmarks are familiar, because certain political institutions and fundamental concepts have been transplanted from the Europe he has left, and especially because he has an instinctive feeling that, basically, people are the same the world over, he is in danger of assuming that everything is similar. The inevitable reaction then is to assert that what is different must necessarily be worse. Disillusioned immigrants and visitors have been responsible for as much distortion as Hollywood in their reporting of the American scene, for they develop a grudge against a system with which they are not equipped to deal and idealize the country they have left—often with great bitterness and no regrets—out of all recognition.

Before leaving England I was told—as who is not?—that I would find Americans adolescent, optimistic, exuberant, energetic, naive, friendly, and without culture. All this is, of course, true. It is also true that some Americans are mature, despondent, sophisticated, xenophobic, and that they have more than six hundred and fifty symphony orchestras. In no nation is it harder to get at all the facts, and generalizations are the gravestones that mark the resting place of many a commentator's reputation. It is a refusal to admit, even tacitly, the coexistence of opposites that makes, at best, for oversimplified views and, at worst, for outright distortion. Forewarned of this danger, I set myself to work out the implications of the fact that America is not merely a larger Britain or a larger France, but a larger Europe. In every comparison one must first be sure that like is being compared with like, and then allow for the residual differences before making one's assessment. It is not enough, I felt, merely to remember to compare America not with any one country, but with Europe as a whole: I must also allow for the complicating factors of history and the intermingling of polyglot communities.

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If America has produced a Huey Long and the Klan, I remember that Europe has been the birthplace of Goebbels and the Croix de Feu. If *gangster* is, as the dictionary says, "colloq., U.S.," it is equally apposite as a description of a Nazi thug or a British cosh-boy. If materialism and lack of culture are charged against the citizens of this republic, what are we to say of the underfeeding and inadequate housing of millions in Italy and France, or the absence of any but the most stereotyped art and music in the "People's Democracies"? I do not want to suggest that a guest should find no fault with the host-country, but rather that he should condemn what is wrong for what it is, and not for being American.

My contacts so far have centered around personalities in industry and commerce, but insofar as the business community is a cross section of the community as a whole and is considered characteristically American, my impressions perhaps have greater validity than the narrow basis for them would in itself allow. In the course of distilling thoughts from my experience, two remarks stood out in my recollection: neither was particularly profound, but each in its own way impressed me at the time of its utterance, and later set up a chain reaction of reflections. Louis and Howard, to whom I attribute the words, do not exist except by coincidence. (This is not said as an apology to either.) They are embodiments of qualities I have noted in the executives I have met—the presidents whose political overtones are scarcely less than those of their counterpart in Washington (a similarity of title that has, surely, peculiar significance in a country where "the business of government is business"); the vice-presidents who proliferate more rapidly than any other biological species; and the host of treasurers, controllers and other officials whose high-flown titles make one realize that you owe the Indians more than Manhattan at a bargain price. These two are thus composite personalities; but they are not, in any except the most literal interpretation, fictitious characters—still less are they caricatures.

Louis is in his mid-forties, dynamic and restless, a man who will not suffer fools or frills gladly. A chemical engineer by training and an entrepreneur by vocation, he had set himself to make a

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million dollars. He had succeeded several times over; for success bored him and his dynamic found satisfaction only in the excitement of growth, so he had sold out whenever his ventures reached maturity. To him an Oxford arts graduate and (for better or worse) representative of British industry was obviously an object of mingled suspicion, perplexity and amusement when viewed as a possible recruit to the ranks of American management. He was polite and helpful, but firm.

"You see," he said, concluding his theme on "the place of the technician in management," "over here we work things somewhat differently. It's the man with technical qualifications—in production, engineering, sales—who is most likely to reach the ranks of general management. You must be prepared for the fact that many executives will tend to discount your British experience. We're as cocky as hell and don't like outsiders telling us how to run our business, especially if they don't have practical 'know-how.' And you can hardly blame us for suspecting that an arts course at Oxford is more suited to the classroom than the office."

From there on we adopted the conventional positions in any argument between the pragmatic and the quixotic, however far we may have felt ourselves from them at the outset.

Here was the old, old problem of the dichotomy between technology and the arts, between the specialist and the humanist. In Britain it is conscious staff policy with most large companies to recruit a certain number of arts graduates as management trainees. The cynic might say that this was making a virtue out of necessity (namely, the shortage of technologists), but it does have a positive motive. As Clemenceau said that war was far too serious a matter to leave to soldiers, so there is a growing belief that higher management is too important a matter to leave entirely to the technicians, that the man who combines a speculative mind with a broad fundamental education is best qualified to deal with the human and social aspects of organization. In America, however, the stress is laid almost exclusively on the engineer, the technologist, the specialist: it is a corollary to the production line and the fact that this country grew to nationhood as an industrial democracy. The mechanical specialist was the founder of the nation's fortunes, and

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now comes nearer than anyone else to being a hero to a people not given to idolizing (the living, at any rate). The position of the specialist in education and the arts, it is interesting to note, is radically different. His opinions are considered no better than the next man's—if, indeed, he is not looked upon as an eccentric, a crank or an "egghead."

In a nebulous way—for there is much woolly thinking on the subject—the "lack of culture" criticism stems from resentment of these facts. One of Europe's literati might conceivably concede the existence of symphony orchestras, art galleries and public libraries, though he would probably insist that they were patronized by "exceptions." But, I believe, his fundamental objection is that the methods of the production line have been applied to education. It is the commercial specialization in colleges that sticks in his throat: "They turn out," he snorts, "not educated graduates, but bootblacks with degrees." Again, he objects that the subject matter of courses is predigested, processed and packaged before presentation: ideas are sifted from facts as chaff from wheat, and everything that has no commercial price is reckoned of no value. These criticisms are typical of the point of view that democratization of learning, anywhere, results in a leveling-down rather than a leveling-up: this view is relative and statistically false (pardon my "materialistic" approach), for the average standard is always and inevitably raised. One may, however, pardonably deplore the lack of individuality in tutorial approach to the student that results from a mass onslaught on education with an inadequate supply of teachers, provided—as always—that it is recognized that neither the problem nor the defect is peculiar to America.

As I left Louis I realized how fatally easy it is to fall into a trap even when you have foreseen it. I could almost sense the traditional prejudices crystallizing in my mind: "He is what you might expect of American business—the lack of sensitivity and fine appreciation; the cynical view of liberal arts; the money-grabbing instinct and devotion to material success." Of course, he didn't actually say all that—he didn't have to! The implication is that you are being farsighted and objective, whereas in fact your disappointment at not finding the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow blinkers you to

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all open-mindedness. It was a chastening experience, but it taught me a new lesson: in a society which has been built up from many peoples and temperaments, compromise is more vital as a *modus vivendi* than in a homogeneous society. Obvious? Perhaps, but every immigrant has to learn it the hard way.

As if to point the truth of the coexistence of opposites, my next meeting was with Howard. Now in his early fifties, he has been with a large corporation for nearly thirty years, ever since he left college with a degree in economics. His philosophy of business is that in a modern industrial society, thinking has taken the place of fighting, despite the jibes of the unrestricted free-enterprisers that such a view represents hardening of the economic arteries. I told him of my talk with Louis, and then, recognizing that my point of view depended upon the objectives one set before business, I asked what he felt these objectives were in America. He paused a moment —I admitted I had pitched him a fast ball—and then said: "Well, I guess I'd put it this way. Our prime responsibility at present is to prove that American business can solve its problems better in a free economic system than in any other, to justify—if you like to put it another way—the American Way of Life." (I'm sure he used verbal capitals: or was there a twinkle in his eye?) "Second, we should assume our share of community responsibilities, and make our corporation a better place to work in, by good wages, fair play and respect for the individual."

It was my turn to pause: I had not expected so formal and lofty a statement "off the cuff." One can argue that it is so vague and general as to be meaningless, or that he had recently addressed the local chamber of commerce. But the more I thought about it later, the more revealing I found it, in two respects. The first is a point not much spoken of here, perhaps because it is taken for granted, and certainly not appreciated as it should be by Europeans. I mean the sense of communal responsibility which both contrasts with and complements self-reliance. Looking back on it, I could mentally identify Howard with the former and Louis with the latter, though it would be truer and fairer to think of both characteristics being present in each in varying degrees. In the days of frontier pioneering, whose traditions and mores still condition

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much of present-day American life, a combination of these two qualities was virtually necessary for survival. For his daily bread, his warmth and shelter, the frontiersman had to rely on the strength of his arm, the quickness of his eye and the sharpness of his wits. Life was a matter of individual performance, and economic conditions were so rudimentary that there was still validity in the old Puritanical belief that a man's failure was exclusively the result of his own shortcomings. For defense, government and entertainment, he could look to his neighbors, but only insofar as he fulfilled the obligations that the community imposed upon him. For all that a man might be left to his own devices for nine-tenths of the time, he was always expected to be ready with hospitality to a guest and aid to the distressed; the frontier had no place for the introvert or egoist in its society. Nowadays, and even in urban communities, the same basic tenets apply. On the one hand, private enterprise—so vital and ubiquitous that it has come to be equated with the American way of life—promises opportunity and rewards to all in proportion to a man's labor (we all know that practice falls somewhat short of the promises). On the other, the vitality of the community spirit is attested by the American's love of "joining"; local groups —P.T.A., community theater, town parliament—exert a commendable appeal, especially to the women, who are less content than their European counterparts to be merely housewives. Even the architecture reflects this spirit: for me there is no more convincing symbol of American "outgoingness" than the front porch with its inviting collection of chairs and that cradle of romance, the swing.

The other point about Howard's statement that set me thinking is one that would be most noticeable to an Englishman. Bluntly, Americans seem to me to overdramatize situations, to take themselves too solemnly. In politics, patriotism, business and individual life, there is a tendency toward the sonorous phrase, the ringing tone, the hand-on-heart attitude. I do not want to say either that life is not a serious matter (God knows it is that!) or that Americans have no sense of humor (though I would not cite the popularity of the so-called "comic strips" in evidence). Nor do I want to pass judgment: I merely report a difference. The pheasant does not have

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the peacock's gaudy plumage; but I do not blame either bird on that account.

Perhaps what I am wanting to say comes out most clearly in the attitude toward patriotism. This is a subject on which the Englishman is "strong and silent," the American direct and vocal. The Englishman says that something is "not cricket," the American that it is "un-American." There is a labored self-consciousness in the propaganda of patriotism that strikes a jarring note in my ears as yet unattuned to the varied sounds in the American orchestra. Yet I realize that this is in fact the keynote that must be struck repeatedly if all the instruments are to play in harmony. The concept of flag and Constitution accords more closely with the Frenchman's *la patrie* or the German's *Vaterland* (how appropriate that the former should have feminine, and the latter masculine connotations!) than with the Englishman's ideas about his native land—or even that great imponderable, the Crown.

It also seems strange and unnecessarily solemn for Howard to talk of industry "justifying the American way of life": strange, but not inexplicable. In the international field one cannot fail to notice in American policy the belief, sometimes announced but always implicit, that America has a mission to bring its way of life to the world. We went through the same stage a century or more ago: Pitt could talk of England saving Europe by her example, and the Victorians of bringing peace to the "lesser breeds without the law." Then it was the "pax Britannica"; now it is "pax Americana." Both may be sincere and dedicated; but both seem pompous to other nations, as a schoolmaster seems pompous to his pupils. The equating of American business with the American way of life carries over into the industrial field some of the phrases and attitudes of political evangelism; and the ensuing effect is somewhat incongruous, as if some corporation president were donning Liberty's robes and wielding her torch.

There are some subjects on which every visitor and immigrant is expected to voice an opinion as a matter of reflex action. On some—parkways, supermarkets and air conditioning—I am merely conventional in my praise: on others I reserve judgment. Of "beizbol"

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I can only say that it surprises me that the Russians should seek credit for inventing such an anarchic pastime; of radio commercials, that I have not yet developed the technique of selective deafness; of New York, that it is the finest city in the world to escape from.

An Englishman in America must always remain a being apart, "at once more foreign and more familiar," as Alistair Cooke has said: except in corporation titles the hyphenated "Anglo-American" does not exist. My fortune is to have made good friends, but if there are ever moments when I feel more foreign than familiar, I can take my Brooke or Keats in hand to read and reminisce, "Silent, upon a peak in Darien," (Connecticut).

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Rebuilding American Cities

The Challenge of Urban Redevelopment

NATHANIEL S. KEITH

THE CRISIS OF AMERICAN CITIES has been viewed with alarm for decades. The decay and obsolescence of the central sections of our metropolitan areas, the spread of slums and blight, the quickening tempo of the flight to the suburbs have been of increasing concern to municipal officials, city planners, newspaper editors, union officials, downtown merchants, and certain segments of the real estate and banking fraternity. This is to mention only a few of the groups which react strongly to the state of affairs in our cities as places in which to live, work and capitalize on investments.

Over the past ten to fifteen years, the growing attention to the plight of American cities has given rise to countless discussions, to numerous investigations and political inquiries, and to many proposed panaceas. Some of the latter have been on a very rarified plane, proposing a complete recasting of the physical structure of cities on a scale comparable to rebuilding after an atomic bombardment. Others, at the opposite extreme, have grossly oversimplified the problem as merely a matter of requiring the owners of substandard properties to make minimum repairs: witness the recurrent enthusiasm of some circles for the "Baltimore plan."

Between these extremes, however, there has developed increasing recognition that the hard core of the crisis of American cities lies in the physical obsolescence of much of their central sections and that feasible solutions to that crisis must involve ways and means of removing those obsolete physical structures. In short, this is the principle of urban redevelopment.

This is not to say that there are not many other equally crucial

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symptoms of the ills of our cities: over-all congestion, distorted land uses, traffic jams, inadequate parking, horse-and-buggy street patterns, insufficient or obsolete community facilities, smoke and smog, and river pollution. It certainly is not to deny that the plight of our cities reflects the absence of planning when they were first developed and that efforts to remedy that plight make sense only within a framework of up-to-date and realistic city planning.

But it is definitely to say that a comprehensive attack on those ills can progress only if the way is cleared of the brick and mortar of worn-out and misplaced structures, which in the main represent private property and are usually too expensive for private enterprise to acquire merely for purposes of demolition.

More than four years ago, Congress took a far-reaching step to help solve this problem. This was done under Title I of the Housing Act of 1949 by authorizing federal loans of $1,000,000,000 and capital grants of $500,000,000 to assist cities in carrying out urban redevelopment projects. The theory was that by the combination of federal financial assistance and the use of local powers of eminent domain, it should be possible to assemble sizable blocks of the blighted real estate that lies athwart the rebuilding of central sections of cities, to clear that land and write down its cost to a feasible value for new development, and to sell or lease it primarily to private enterprise for rebuilding in accordance with a definite local plan of land use. The law further required that the redevelopment plan for each project be in accord with a general plan for the development of the locality as a whole.

This program, new and untested and without substantial precedent, has been slow in gathering momentum. But by now, approximately 60 projects are under way in over 30 cities. These involve the acquisition and clearance of over 2,000 acres of slums and blighted areas. Their redevelopment—in new housing, public improvements, or new commercial or industrial facilities—will involve an investment of about $600,000,000, primarily in private funds. In about 70 other communities, projects involving over 3,000 acres of blighted city land are in the final stages of planning, while about 120 other localities are in the process of selecting their first project areas. In short, all cities with population of over

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1,000,000, most of the middle-sized cities and many of the smaller ones have redevelopment programs under way or on the planning boards.

There are numerous indications that events over the next year will have a decisive bearing on whether this burgeoning program will move ahead and make a valid contribution to the revival of American cities, one worth its cost in federal and local funds and in time and trouble. From the forces assembling in behalf of redevelopment, the prospects appear to be favorable for a successful weathering of this test period.

The growing support for redevelopment comes from a variety of sources. The typical attitude of big city mayors was recently voiced by David L. Lawrence, the astute Democratic boss of Pittsburgh and himself a pioneering leader of redevelopment in his own city. He said, "The urban redevelopment program is the only method that we have found which can be put to work to rebuild our cities in a comprehensive manner, and make our outworn obsolete districts function for us socially, economically, and fiscally. . . . This is our great domestic problem; our great domestic opportunity. And all too possibly it is our last chance."

Support from a different vantage point came recently from General Otto L. Nelson, Jr., vice-president of the New York Life Insurance Company and head of "Project East River," the too-little-noticed study of urban vulnerability to atomic bombardment conducted in 1952 for the federal government. In a speech last October before the American Society of Planning Officials, he warned that congested central city areas were sitting ducks for fire storm destruction from atomic bombing unless high priority is given to a stepped-up program of slum clearance and redevelopment to reduce population- and building-densities. He went on to say: "Nearly every step that needs to be taken to reduce the vulnerability of our cities in case of war ought to be taken any way in order to make our country a better place in which to live and work, irrespective of peace or war. This is not a convenient slogan —it is a fact."

Perhaps most significant from the standpoint of the immediate future of the redevelopment program is the attitude taken by the

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Advisory Committee on Government Housing Policies and Programs appointed by President Eisenhower last fall. This group, heavily weighted with Republicans and with commercial and mortgage bankers and representatives of the real estate and building industries, scrutinized redevelopment along with related programs over a three-month period. In its report in December, the committee called for a broadened redevelopment program and for future increases in the available federal funds. The committee said, "To wipe out existing slums and to check the spread of blight is a major goal of our housing program. To reach this goal we must remove houses and clear areas of our cities which are beyond recall; we must restore to sound condition all dwellings worth saving. . . . A piecemeal attack on slums simply will not work."

Behind this varied and growing support for redevelopment lie the shocking dimensions of slums and blighted areas in this country. The statistics show that in 1950, over 11,500,000 dwelling units or 30 per cent of the non-farm housing supply were delapidated, or lacking private indoor flush toilet or bath or hot or cold running water. While a considerable proportion of these dwellings could be subject to repairs or the installation of standard sanitary facilities, there is general agreement that from 5,000,000 to 7,000,000 units are beyond hope of salvage and are ripe only for demolition.

While there is considerable variation among cities in the ratio of poor housing to good housing, the slum problem is a universal one among American communities, with the possible exception of a few of the most exclusive bedroom suburbs of large metropolitan areas. During the four years that I headed the federal urban redevelopment program, I personally inspected the slums of more than 60 cities from east to west and from north to south and gained a paper knowledge of the slums of another 200-odd communities. There are the tenements of Boston and New York, which were ready-made but durable slums from their inception. There are the mansions-converted-into-slums of Cleveland, Chicago and Los Angeles. There are the miserable "nigger shanties" of the South and the "skid rows" and Mexican "shack towns" of the West. In fact, in my travels I encountered a curious spirit of competition

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among local officials who would frequently boast to me that their community has "the worst damn slums in the country."

However, the problems created by blight and obsolescence cut wider than the shameful living conditions of the slums. The slums are heavy deficit areas from the standpoint of city treasuries. Many of them are in locations now totally unsuited for residential use but which could provide much needed room for expansion and modernization of downtown business and commerce. Many of them freeze hopelessly outdated street patterns and frustrate the quest for open space and ease of circulation, which are among the primary facts of life in the fight against urban congestion. In short, our cities are struggling with an obsolete physical pattern which developed without anticipation of the tremendous expansion of urban population within the past half-century or of the revolution in living habits caused by the gasoline engine.

An equally potent factor in the support for urban redevelopment is the need for public underwriting of its cost. At least nine times out of ten, it will cost substantially more to acquire built-up city real estate—even though it be severely blighted—than can be recovered from selling the underlying land at a price that will be attractive and feasible for new private development. In exceptional locations and under exceptional circumstances, it may pay a private entrepreneur to buy a Ritz-Carlton Hotel in New York City simply to tear it down and provide a site for a new office building. But in the vast majority of cases, there would be no takers if blighted real estate were offered to private enterprise on that basis. The persistence of slums over the decades is the best evidence of the truth of that statement.

Furthermore, given the existing allocation of the tax dollar between the federal and local governments and the costs of essential municipal services, the federal treasury must absorb the bulk of the cost of urban redevelopment. Redevelopment laws were on the statute books of twenty-four of the most populous states prior to the passage of the federal law; with few exceptions there had been no activity under them due primarily to the lack of state or local financing. In 1947, I assisted the late Senator Robert Wagner in conducting a poll of mayors on the urban redevelopment question,

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as part of the studies leading up to the Housing Act of 1949. Over 95 per cent of them reported that federal financial aid was essential if urban redevelopment was to be an effective program. I am sure a similar poll conducted today would show at least as high a percentage on this question.

Under the present federal law, federal capital grants can absorb up to two-thirds of the net cost of an urban redevelopment project, i.e., the difference between the cost of buying the old real estate, demolishing the buildings and installing the site improvements, and the appraised value of the cleared land for new development. The balance is contributed by the local government in cash or in the cost of new public improvements. Based on practical experience, this appears to be the maximum freight which can be borne by strained municipal treasuries.

The justification for spending federal funds for redevelopment is a matter of the national benefits attached to maintaining the vitality of American cities. From a strictly dollars-and-cents standpoint, which is only one of the many considerations, the experience to date indicates that every federal dollar spent for capital grants will make possible about six to seven dollars in new private and public investment in the rebuilding of blighted areas. More important than this, in my opinion, are the benefits from combating urban decay. Since the economic strength of the nation rests primarily in its cities, it should follow that measures to keep cities physically equipped for modern living are at least as essential as federal aid for soil reclamation, crop price support or shipbuilding.

A further strong influence in support of redevelopment over the next year will be the example of the guinea-pig projects now under way. There is no need to claim perfection for these projects in all their details. The important fact is that they are proving that urban redevelopment will work. They are generally reducing the density of population in congested areas, drastically cutting the percentage of land covered by buildings, and developing new street systems, frequently in conjunction with other major traffic improvements. They are clearing slums which for decades have withstood the well-meaning efforts of civic organizations lacking the ammunition for effective attacks upon them. They are attracting private capital into

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the rebuilding of central sections of cities where private capital was unable or unwilling to venture before.

In New York City, under the forceful even if sometimes controversial leadership and prodding of Robert Moses, the seven redevelopment projects already under way and three others now ready to go will clear about 180 acres of heavily congested slums and rundown commercial buildings in Manhattan and Brooklyn. In their place, at a total investment of about $250,000,000, will be built 13,750 rental and co-operative apartments, in buildings covering only 15 to 20 per cent of the residential land, a new coliseum with capacity for 18,000 persons, new buildings and expanded campus facilities for New York University, Long Island University and Pratt Institute, and a considerable area of neighborhood retail stores. In all, this represents a sizable bite into the slums and blighted areas of New York.

Philadelphia is also in the process of a major face-lifting operation through redevelopment, which was begun under the old Republican regime and is being pressed by the new Democratic regime of Mayor Clark. Redevelopment projects are under way or projected in three blighted urban neighborhoods which will lead to about 2,800 new dwelling units, with schools, playgrounds and new shopping areas. Also well advanced are plans for a new city within a city in the Eastwick section, a swampy area of some four square miles in the southeastern corner of the city. Now a hodgepodge of scattered shack towns, this area, after clearing and filling, is projected as a new community of 15,000 houses and apartments, complete with schools, parks and shopping centers, and including a new industrial district of about 900 acres.

Across the state, a fascinating coalition of Democratic politicians and big capitalists has provided the steam behind a sweeping plan for the revival of Pittsburgh. The principals have been, on the one hand, Mayor Lawrence and, on the other, the Mellons, United States Steel and its compatriots, and the big downtown merchants. Their common ground and common vision were to recognize that Pittsburgh must rebuild or fade away as an important capital of the American industrial empire. Under this impetus, the cluttered and worn-out Golden Triangle, where the Allegheny and Monongahela

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Rivers join to form the Ohio, has been cleared of its old commercial structures, which are being replaced by a state park commemorating the original site of Fort Pitt and by three skyscraper office buildings in parklike surroundings. Accomplishment number two was to provide a site for a major new mill for Jones and Laughlin Steel, the only major steel plant remaining within Pittsburgh proper. The plant needed to expand and modernize; without redevelopment it could not have done so, since its properties were surrounded by slums which could not be assembled by a private buyer lacking the power of eminent domain. The Pittsburgh redevelopment coalition is now turning its attention to the Lower Hill district, a miserable slum of over 100 acres rising directly from the downtown district. This area is planned as a major cultural center for the city, developed in conjunction with new parkways and expressways and apartments commanding a view of the city and its rivers.

During the many years that Congress has intermittently examined the nation's slum problem, a favorite newspaper device for illustrating stories on these investigations has been a photograph of sordid alley shacks in Washington, D.C., with the dome of the Capitol rising majestically in the background. Many of these shacks still stand; others have been removed in piecemeal fashion. Finally, the surgical approach is being used on a 77-acre tract in southwest Washington, now a heavily built-up slum area bordering the Washington waterfront and within easy access of the business section and Capitol Hill. Here, 900 units of new housing will be developed, along with expanded recreational facilities, new stores, and the right-of-way for a major new expressway which will cross one corner of the project. This is only the first bite in a longer-range program for the full redevelopment of southwest Washington.

In the Midwest, Chicago is redeveloping 101 acres of congested slums on the Southside under a plan calling for 2,000 apartments, largely in high-rise buildings commanding a near view of Lake Michigan, for a major shopping center and for a park and school site, with only about 10 per cent of the land to be covered by buildings. In a second project, located just one mile from the Loop in an area surrounded by industrial and commercial development, a 50-

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acre pocket of ancient slums is being cleared for redevelopment as a planned light industrial district. These are the forerunners of an extensive program which will also tackle the problem of reclaiming thousands of acres of vacant land in "dead" subdivisions on the outskirts of the city, derelicts of the speculative real estate boom of the twenties.

One of the most dramatic demonstrations of redevelopment is the "Capitol Approach" program in St. Paul. Here, the Minnesota Capitol is being rescued from the blighted environment of 190 acres of run-down houses and a patchwork of obsolete streets. The immediate approach to the Capitol, involving about one-third of the acreage, has been acquired through state and city funds and is being laid out in an open plan of parkways, malls, and sites for new public buildings. Flanking the Capitol to the east and west, two redevelopment projects involving over 120 acres are under way. The old street pattern will be abandoned for a new design of parkways to carry through traffic and to serve as buffers for the rebuilt areas. About 1,250 apartments will be built, together with neighborhood parks, schools, and private office buildings and stores.

In Norfolk, the first redevelopment project of 127 acres is making possible the development of a modern traffic and highway system for the city and its connections with the nearby city of Portsmouth and with the massive naval installations in the area. In addition, land is being made available for industrial and commercial expansion and for public housing.

In Nashville, 67 acres of slum property surrounding the Capitol of Tennessee are being cleared to make way for high-class commercial development and a new street system. In Birmingham, a 60-acre blighted residential area will be removed to provide for a greatly enlarged medical center in connection with the University of Alabama Medical School.

San Francisco, the earliest Western metropolis and a city largely hemmed in by natural boundaries and becoming land hungry, is the pacesetter for redevelopment in the West. One project involves a 109-acre bite out of the "Western Addition," that part of old San Francisco which was unscathed by the earthquake and fire of 1906 and which has grown increasingly blighted and congested

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with the years. This area will be redeveloped at much lower density, with about 2,000 apartments and with supporting commercial and public facilities and traffic improvements. A second project involves reclaiming Diamond Heights, 325 acres of hill land hitherto unusable for building, five miles from the center of the city and commanding magnificent views of San Francisco Bay. Land for about 2,500 units of private housing of all building types will be made available, in addition to schools, parks and shopping centers.

This, then, is a cross section of the first experimental probe of redevelopment into the structure of American cities. Similar programs are under way in Somerville, Massachusetts; Providence; Stamford; Portchester; Jersey City; Newark; Perth Amboy; Chester; Baltimore; Detroit; Cincinnati; Kansas City; Murfreesboro and Union City, Tennessee; Bristol, Virginia; Montgomery; Mobile; Little Rock; Honolulu; and numerous cities in Puerto Rico. Others are maturing in cities like Boston, Worcester, Hartford, New Haven, Harrisburg, Cleveland, Columbus, Toledo, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Sacramento and many smaller towns.

These are encouraging beginnings, offering good evidence of the feasibility of redevelopment but only scratching the surface of the total problem. The full program of $500,000,000 in capital grants now authorized would finance the redevelopment of perhaps 10,000 acres of slums and blighted areas, containing about 200,000 substandard dwellings. The value of the new buildings and other improvements in these areas would be between $3,000,000,000 and $3,500,000,000. This would have a measurable impact on the structures of cities but it would have cured directly only 3 to 4 per cent of the total problem of urban blight. As a one-shot performance without continuity, the benefits would be overshadowed during the years by the continuing pressures for urban decay.

Based on these beginnings, what are the realistic prospects for an expanded effort, on a scale commensurate with the size of the problem?

In my opinion, the answer to that question rests largely on three factors: first, the ability of cities to move their redevelopment programs at much faster tempo than during the experimental period

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since 1949; second, the crystallization of support for redevelopment in a manner that will overcome the many economic and political obstacles, both local and national; and third, the willingness of the Eisenhower Administration and of Congress to give more than token backing to a stepped-up program.

As to the first factor, the relatively slow pace of redevelopment thus far is understandable in terms of the complexity and novelty of the undertaking. While redevelopment can never become a simple or automatic process, there is ample evidence that with this experience behind them, the local redevelopment agencies can move ahead with their second and third run of projects much more rapidly.

The support for redevelopment is reaching into quarters which should prove effective in quieting local opposition, such as that stemming from slum landlordism, and also prove helpful in advancing the program on the national plane. In most cities, the downtown banks, the large downtown merchants and the other business establishments with a stake in the revival of central business districts are supporters of redevelopment. Builders, real estate investors and mortgage-lending institutions are showing greater interest in a program which is beginning to offer opportunities for large-scale construction in central locations. Joined with these sources of support are most city governments, civic-minded organizations and organized labor.

As to the status of redevelopment in the Washington scene today, the situation is more complex. On the one hand, the Administration is supporting legislation embracing the recommendations of the President's advisory committee for a broadened program. On the other hand, the execution of such a program must cope with the pressure for public retrenchment and run the gantlet of those groups in Congress and elsewhere which view most federal grant-in-aid programs with skepticism if not with suspicion. Furthermore, it will face the flirtation of some influential groups with rehabilitation and various "fix-up" plans as a cheap substitute for the basic job of rebuilding.

Nevertheless, the balance of forces is such that redevelopment will doubtless survive the Congressional test this year and next. This

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is made all the more likely by the increasing sensitivity of the Administration to the fears of a substantial economic recession. To stimulate six or seven dollars of new private investment for each federal dollar spent in grants for redevelopment would be one of the cheaper ways of cushioning the economy.

Whether sufficient push will emerge to carry redevelopment to full maturity in the near future is a much more uncertain question. A case in point is that the Administration has not backed up its support with a request for increased program funds at this time. Nevertheless, in my opinion, now is the time to press for continuity in redevelopment on a much broader scale. I believe a realistic objective would be a program of $2,000,000,000 additional in federal grants, contemplating eventual expenditure of these funds at an average rate of about $250,000,000 a year. This would represent a little more than 1/3 of 1 per cent of the present federal budget and perhaps ½ of 1 per cent of the minimum achievable federal budget.

On such a scale, redevelopment would have the opportunity to progress to maturity. A program of this size would clear 40,000 to 50,000 acres in the most congested areas, removing perhaps 1,000,000 substandard dwellings. It would open up those areas for rebuilding on modern plans providing for ease of circulation and substantial open space. It would stimulate directly a new investment of $12,000,000,000 to $14,000,000,000 in housing, commercial and industrial facilities and public improvements. It would indirectly stimulate substantial additional off-site expenditures for rehousing and public improvements.

I do not pretend that such a program would bring on the millennium in urban life. But it would provide a solid base for the revitalization of the central sections of cities and for reversing the long-term trend of urban decay. In view of the mounting pressures for relief of the crisis of our cities and the impact of that crisis on our huge concentration of urban population, this may well prove to be an achievable objective within the not too distant future.

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..... Under Whatever Sky .....

IRWIN EDMAN

Only 'Til Tomorrow

Man's whole life often becomes strangely focused at his death. No matter what else he has done, some phrase he has invented, some title he has used, stamps itself on the public mind. It becomes a symbol and ultimately a cliché. This was exactly what happened to Frederick Lewis Allen and his book *Only Yesterday*. He had done many other things and, as his friends knew, was a wide and varied personality. But *Only Yesterday*, even to those who have never read the book so entitled, conveyed perfectly a sense of both memory and nostalgia. Even those who had been infants in the twenties or were unborn at the time derived from the pages of that short and adroit social history a sense of a lost though odd and hectic Arcady.

Each of us has his own "only yesterday" and nostalgia is at the moment a highly exploited emotion; even the bad old yesterday has become the "good old days." One expects that any time now there is going to be what might be described as a reverse English on nostalgia, that there will be a book entitled *Only 'Til Tomorrow*. For it is not true that utopias are always put into the wild and improbable future; there are near-handed myopic utopias, romantic expectations of the instant realization of some project, some program, some idea. It is not the Last Judgment that seems immediately at hand, but some earthly paradise, some immediately-to-be-established and beneficent revolution in art, in gadgetry, in politics.

Thus on occasions we are told that it will be only 'til tomorrow that slums and shanty towns will disappear, only 'til tomorrow that cancer and polio will be vanquished, only a long moment before the threats and alarms of war will be dispersed. The tomorrow does not come, or it does come and the promise is unfulfilled. Does one not remember when as a child one was promised that one would be taken to the circus tomorrow and—one burst into tears? Tomorrow seemed and was an eternity off; and the tomorrow of the social reformers, the medical ameliorators, seems centuries off too. Only the gadgets seem to arrive ahead of schedule, particularly the lethal ones that seem only to put utopia off to an impossibly distant century after tomorrow.

The Survival of What Fits In

Anyone who has reflected on the philosophy of criticism is aware how different are the criteria by which one judges books. The psychologist, the sociologist, the moralist, the historian, the *précieux*, the craftsman, all bring their special interest and their special accents to bear on the judgment of literature. But there is one type of reader, or rather, a reader under special and happily temporary circumstances, who perhaps throws a new and unexpected light on the criteria of literary truth—namely, the man in the process of moving, especially if he happens to be moving from larger to smaller quarters, and especially if he happens to be living in New York, where space is at such a premium that sometime soon even literate people will have room only for a book *a* month, if not *of the* month, one copy of *Life* and Duncan Hines's *Adventures in Good Eating*.

In the course of years as a voracious reader and as one professionally concerned with books, I found recently, when I was about to move, that despite periodic bursts of cleaning out books, foisting some upon friends and upon libraries too poor to look a gift anthology in the mouth—despite all of this, I was inundated. Books kept coming in, as my housekeeper used to say, "like sacks to the mill." I was moving into smaller quarters and there was no choice for it—I had to choose among books, many of them very good ones. The decisions were something between a major crisis and heartbreak. There were books I could scarcely bear to part with, although I finally did.

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There were volumes not important in themselves, but deeply important in my own memories and initiations. There was, for example, something called *Selections from Walter Pater,* a badly printed and, in fact, I found as I glanced through it, not too well selected anthology of Pater's purple and beige patches. But the book called to my mind my initiation into fastidious prose, and it was fused in my memory with a whole year's study of Victorian literature as a sophomore. Carl Van Doren was my engaging teacher, all the more engaging as he revealed sometimes, by a good-naturedly conspiratorial smile, that he himself did not take the Victorians quite as seriously as he was supposed to.

There was in my collection a volume called *Essays for College Men* containing, among other things, a Phi Beta Kappa address by Woodrow Wilson (then president of Princeton University) called "The Spirit of Learning," which seemed to me the wisest thing I had ever read about education—and when I read it at the age of seventeen, I suppose it was. I found myself rereading the essay; it is still good, so good that it delayed my moving for fifteen minutes. After a great crisis of decision I kept the book.

There were other problems: Did I really need to retain Harnack's *History of Christian Dogma*—in seven volumes? How large a library I had intended to build when I bought that work thirty years ago, I cannot imagine. I think it must be all of fifteen years since I have looked at that learned and stodgy work. It was not hard to persuade myself that I could do without it, nor was it very difficult to convince myself that I had to dispose of books that in their time had had a certain intellectual fashionableness—like *The Tyranny of Words* by Stuart Chase, who had suddenly discovered, somewhat later than Socrates, that people misuse words, and had come to the startling conclusion that all abstractions are nonsense. There was Count Keyserling's *Travel Diary of a Philosopher,* widely regarded in its day, though even then some reviewer—it could have been myself—described it as "a journal of a wandering mind." There was not even a question in my mind whether to pay storage charges on these and a hundred others. Of course, duplicate copies of one's own works pose a problem, and so do autographed copies of books by one's friends and vain or generous strangers. As time moved on and the removing date grew nearer, I found myself growing more and more ruthless. At the end I came very near throwing out extra copies of my *own* works, so badly was I driven.

Criticism has all kinds of criteria; but perhaps the main one in cities in America, and especially in New York, is what will fit into a given small space. Scholarly critics will, I think, call this the criterion of context. It is surprising on this basis how many books one can learn to do without.

The Irony of Distance

The pathos of distance is a familiar enough notion, though, it must be confessed, a vague one. In the contemporary scene, the irony of distance would be a more relevant and more precise phrase. For there is irony surely in the rapidity of transport. Waiting in an airport in Seattle, one hears within twenty minutes the droningly casual announcement of planes to Tokyo, to New York and Texas, to Manila, to Montana, to Boston. In sixty hours one can be anywhere in the world with, in the words of the late President Roosevelt, a bomb. But the casual civilian traveler can be anywhere or everywhere at least with a suitcase, and if one has forgotten anything, one can get it or its equivalent at Bangkok or Beirut. The airports where one arrives all look alike and the shops in and near them all look alike too. One flies—a deceptively melodramatic word for what feels simply like a bus trip—halfway around the world to find one knows not just what, but actually to find what one has left.

On all of this is based the irony of distance in the modern world. It is actually just about as expensive to fly to Australia in three days as it would be if it took three weeks. It is not the slowness of travel, but the lowness of income that keeps people bound to their parish and to their province. An English farmer in Dorset may join

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vicariously in the triumph of British jet airplanes, but it is doubtful whether he gets to London once a year in the Tuppington local. It is easy enough to get anywhere fast these days if one can arrange to get started, but the arranging is not easier than it used to be. It is doubtful comfort for the home-immured to console themselves with a latter-day streamlined version of an Odyssey.

If the answer to the question "How are things in Connemara?" is that they are just about the same at the airport as they are in Liechtenstein or Ceylon, it is much more comfortable and inexpensive to remain at home. Though it once took an endless journey of eighty days to get around the world, one saw something en route. So high and so fast do we fly now that we scarcely see anything at all; and what one does see, one could behold right at one's own doorstep. During the last war there used to be a poster in railroad stations, asking in large capital letters, "Is This Trip Necessary?" A good many people may well ask themselves now, "Is This Trip Necessary or Ultimately Rewarding?" Probably one had best just stay home and look at a travelogue of Bangkok on television. The experts will be sure to have picked out the parts that really look far away and long ago.

Open Letter to Foreign Friends

Dear Albanian, Frenchman or Turk:

I have been meaning for some time to write you a little letter of reassurance. It must occasionally seem to you from what you read in your own newspapers and in ours that we have all gone quite mad. Close as you are to the actual world of communism, you must sometimes wonder at the hysteria we display, and it must seem very odd to you that expressions of opinion that would by nineteenth-century standards have seemed mildly liberal at most, and are indeed only that, could be thought to be wildly revolutionary or dangerously totalitarian. I am afraid I have contributed to your malaise by sending you copies of American newspapers: Puerto Rican Nationalists shooting up our Congress and certain congressmen sounding as if they would like to shoot up the world. You read of teen-age dope addicts in our cities and gangs of adolescent terrorists attacking passers-by. You hear perhaps that there are more inmates of our mental hospitals than there are inmates of our universities. I do not blame you in the least for being concerned about us. There are a good many among us so concerned themselves that they are whipping themselves into a frenzy of alarm and despair that will speedily add them to the patients in psychiatric clinics.

Now, dear interested foreigner, let me say a few words of reassurance. I live in New York, an immense place in which there is probably as much hysterical fanaticism and violence as any place in the United States. It is a metropolis of great congestion, where the conditions of transportation are such that visitors sometimes think a snarl is the obligatory form of greeting. But within the purlieus of this Babylon, every day in contacts casual or professional I meet an astonishing number of simple people going about their business and going about their pleasure with good sense and good humor. In fact, there are so many of them that their behavior is not newsworthy and they do not ever make the headlines.

So will you note the next time you read of some eminent political thug in our Senate, or some juvenile monster in our suburbs, will you not try to remember that our monstrosities are not any more numerous than anywhere else in the world? It simply happens that at the present time everything that happens in this country becomes a symptom of often alarming interest to the world outside our borders.

There is a story told among us about a Russian diplomat who accepted an invitation to a private home in Washington. After dinner he was taken up to see one of the offspring of the family. The child had fallen asleep, and when the father and stranger entered the room the youngster simply opened his eyes and smiled, a quite human if quite sleepy smile. "But he is like any other child!" said the Russian. Won't you try to remember that we are like any other of God's children too—for better or for worse?

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..... The Revolving Bookstand .....

Crises in Education

ESSAYS ON EDUCATION. By A. Whitney Griswold. *New Haven: Yale University Press. 164 pp. $2.75.*

Reviewed by GEORGE N. SHUSTER

Not every university president would venture to put into a book the random addresses he has delivered in order to save the world, admonish youth and balance the budget. If all did, the number of unctuous remarks which would be added to the literature of the nation would probably overtax even the latest calculating machines. But there is a quality of directness, honesty and manly concern in Dr. Griswold's speeches which is as reassuring as the things he talks about are important.

Of course he stresses the same points again and again. The liberal arts are being tossed overboard in the United States, he says, remaining convinced that they alone can make education what it must be if the nation is to remain intellectually and morally strong enough to meet its obligations in the world. Indeed, Dr. Griswold sometimes writes as if there is nothing that ails us which a hot application of the liberal arts cannot cure. But while it is possible to cite not a few mortals who seem to have done pretty well without the formal collegiate massage described, or to list others who took the cure without results determinably beneficent, the truth is nevertheless on Dr. Griswold's side. The fact that many of our ablest citizens receive a one-sided technical education while others obtain none at all is so obviously an American misfortune that one cannot talk about it too often or too sternly. The conception of the liberal arts is broader and more eclectic than that sponsored by Mr. Hutchins, but a kinship is manifest.

Two other notes are sounded again and again in the book, though they are immersed in the soft music played for Yale alone. The first is that American education, from the grade school to the university, is one unit, and that the success of the enterprise depends upon the excellence of all the parts. The second is that the nation is not at all adequately prepared to cope with the problem, and that in particular it will be fumbling badly once the bulge in the population begins to demand schooling. He is as right about them both as the Prophets. Therefore, it is utterly silly to engage in argument about public as compared with private education; both are indispensable, and only if both prosper in harmonious relationship can the challenge be met.

And met it cannot be unless there are enough good teachers in buildings which permit careful and intelligent training of young people. A quarter of a century ago, it was the rural child who fared poorly. Today the urban youngster is probably worse off than the boy or girl on the farm. So bad has the situation become in some places that an exodus from the cities for the sake of the children is taking place. The roots of our delinquency problem, moreover, are certainly to be found in the fact that it is at present impossible to give problem youngsters the kind of educational care they require. If the private schools are better off in this respect, it is only because they are in a position to screen out most of society's potential evildoers. Even so, one cannot fence off the elect without taking into account that sooner or later there will have to be a merger.

What Dr. Griswold says about these matters will, I trust, help to awaken Americans to a situation which gravely threatens the fundamental assumptions of democratic

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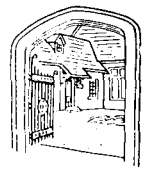

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society. For example, if parents go on thinking that they can foist their children off on the schools, and then blame these for whatever goes wrong, they must face the fact that they will have to pay for the service, at least at prevailing baby-sitter rates. This holds for the college as well as for the elementary school. The bricklayer will have to understand that if the society in which he is paid more than the professor does not do something about the matter, the professor is going to lay brick too.

At two places I find myself dissenting a little. First, desirable though higher education in the liberal arts is, and liberating as campus life frequently remains, it does not seem to me that the extension of educational opportunity to all requires additions to college dormitories and four years of isolation from work. I am persuaded that, the hours of employment and the conditions under which they are given being what they are, it is entirely feasible for large numbers of people to acquire an education, and even a degree, in their leisure time, provided extension services and adult education opportunities are afforded in the proper manner. Second, I am persuaded that Dr. Griswold is too pessimistic about the status of European schools. The Germans, for example, have rescued their secondary schools; and many of these are again doing work which, if we are not careful, will make us look to our laurels.

But these are debatable matters. About the major issues with which Dr. Griswold is concerned, there can be no doubt. Either we shall cope with them or the quality of the national life will suffer grievously, perhaps calamitously.

A Passionate Self-Appraisal

A WRITER'S DIARY. By Virginia Woolf. *New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. 372 pp. $5.00.*

Reviewed by LEO LERMAN

A Writer's Diary begins on Monday, August 4th, 1918: "While waiting to buy a book in which to record my impressions first of Christina Rossetti, then of Byron, I had better write them here." It ends on Sunday, March 8th, 1941: "I think it is true that one gains a certain hold on sausage and haddock by writing them down." In the twenty-three years between Miss Rossetti and Lord Byron, the sausage and the haddock, Virginia Woolf gained more than "a certain hold" by writing down. Pursuing the moment, hot to transfix it, writing as much of it down as anyone ever had, and then managing somehow to write just a bit more, she bestowed upon each of us a little of her immortality. Novels, short stories, sketches, essays, criticism, biographies—she wrote in all of these forms. And concurrently she wrote what appears to be one of literature's most important self-revelations, her journals—twenty-six volumes of them. *A Writer's Diary* is a book of excerpts from these journals. These extracts are homogeneous, for Leonard Woolf, in arranging this much of the twenty-seven year record for publication, chose those entries which pertain to his wife's writing and reading. "The diary," he says, "is too personal to be published as a whole during the lifetime of many people referred to in it." Only future readers of the complete journal can judge how much of the banquet Mr. Woolf has given us. But this one volume of excerpts is, in itself, a feast.

In her essay on John Evelyn, written in 1920, Virginia Woolf said, "Should you wish to make sure that your birthday will be celebrated three hundred years hence, your best course is undoubtedly to keep a diary. Only first be certain that you have the courage to lock your genius in a private book and the humor to gloat over a fame that will be yours only in the grave. For the good diarist writes either for himself alone or for a posterity so distant that it can safely hear every secret and justly weigh every motive." Nowhere in *A Writer's Diary* does Mrs. Woolf evidence desiring, by the keeping of this diary, birthday celebrations

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✪ LEO LERMAN is *Mademoiselle*'s Contributing Editor, in charge of entertainment, books and the arts. He had made extensive studies of the works of Proust, Edith Wharton and Virginia Woolf.

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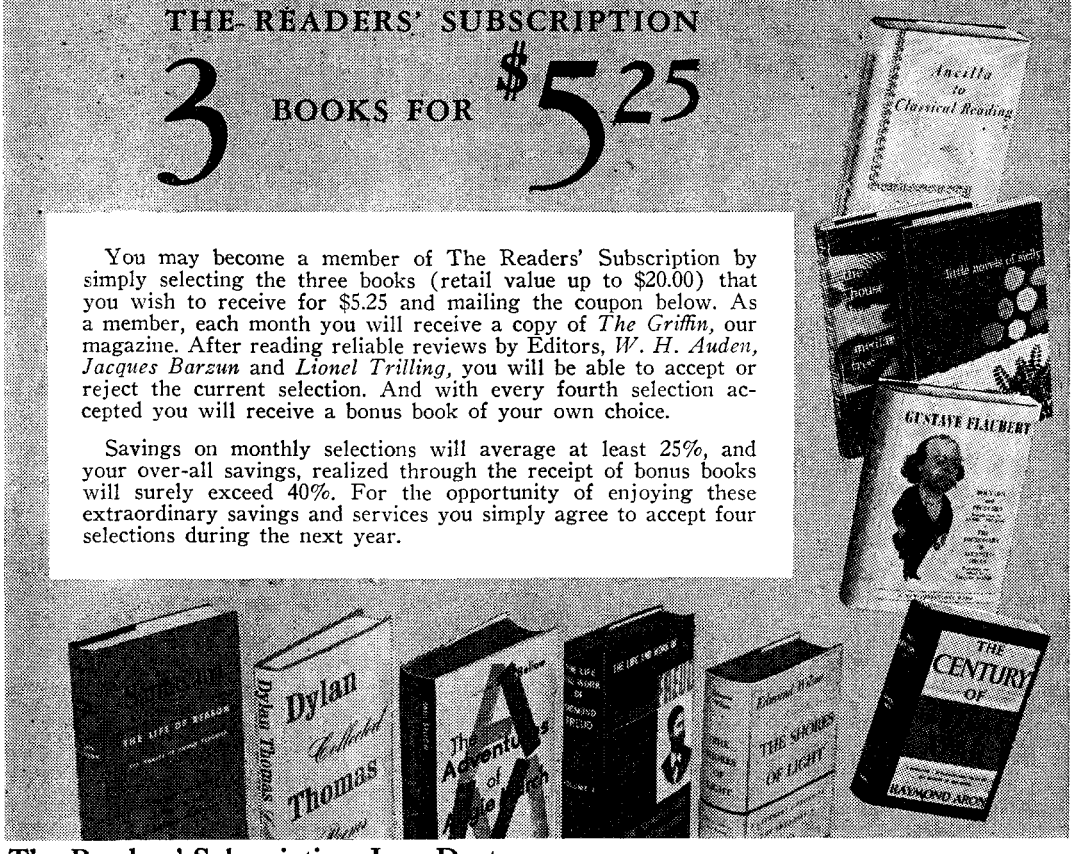

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circa the year 2220. A score and more of published volumes testify happily that she did not have the courage to lock her genius in a private book. That she wrote for herself alone, some readers of *A Writer's Diary* will doubt. But even when making notes on public occasions, luncheons with the great, prize-givings, the eclipse of 1927 (a masterly piece of description), a visit to Thomas Hardy ("a little puffy-cheeked cheerful old man"), she writes in that semaphoric manner writers employ to capture and so preserve an impression, an essence—the sheen of light on a moth's wings, sunlight on water, a mannerism, the way colors sound and the way speech looks—the raw materials of burgeoning works. "It strikes me that in this book I practice writing; do my scales; yes and work at certain effects. . . ."

But, of course, "this book" is much more than a writer's practice book. It is the private world of a most sensitive woman of great intellectuality, one of the twentieth century's supreme literary artists. Here is how she actually worked; how ideas first came to her; how they grew; how the work in hand eluded her, was almost what she hoped it to be, was nothing at all, was something quite unexpected. Here is torment and joy, misery, despair. ". . . in the few minutes that remain, I must record, heaven be praised, the end of *The Waves*. I wrote the words O Death fifteen minutes ago, having reeled across the last ten pages with some moments of such intensity and intoxication that I seemed only to stumble after my own voice, or almost, after some sort of speaker (as when I was mad) I was almost afraid, remembering the voices that used to fly ahead. Anyhow, it is done; and I have been sitting these 15 minutes in a state of glory, and calm, and some tears. . . . How physical the sense of triumph and relief is! Whether good or bad, it's done; and, as I certainly felt at the end, not merely finished, but rounded off, completed, the thing stated—how hastily, how fragmentarily I know; but I mean that I have netted that fin in the waste of water which appeared to me over the marshes out of my window at Rodmell when I was coming to an end of *To the Lighthouse*. . . ."

And that, essentially, is *A Writer's Diary*, Virginia Woolf "in a state of glory," in a calm, in tears, in rapture, in passionate self-appraisal, in a fury at the inanities of the world, worried over her reviews, furious with friends who did not praise, in terror of that madness which hunted her down the years—Virginia Woolf, self-transfixed and captured in her own private moment, and always writing, reading and writing, the new book leaping up in her mind while the book upon which she labored jogged along. Saturday, November 23rd, 1940: "Having this moment finished the Pageant or Poyntz Hall? [later titled *Between the Acts*] . . . my thoughts turn well up, to write the first chapter of the next book (nameless) Anon, it will be called." But she never wrote it, for one March morning in 1941 she took up her walking stick and went away across the Downs. When she reached the River Ouse, she carefully placed her walking stick upon the bank and, fully clothed, moved resolutely into the river. So she killed herself appropriately, by drowning. She was fifty-nine years old. By her death, she completed what perhaps is her major work, her journal. "Queer," she had written in this very journal ten years before, "how one regrets the dispersal of anybody who seemed—as I say—genuine: who had direct contact with life. . . ."

The Introduction to Evil

THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER. By Davis Grubb. *New York: Harper & Brothers. 273 pp. $3.00.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM MICHELFELDER

One might venture that this beautiful, almost shadowy first novel is a long didactic poem—not by academic definition, but in the sense of lyrical beauty teaching a moral lesson and a principle of art. The lesson is that of a terrible loneliness that must come to a sensitive childhood despoiled by the

WILLIAM MICHELFELDER, a first novelist himself, is the author of the recently published *A Seed Upon the Wind*. He is a staff writer for the *New York World-Telegram and Sun*.

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evil of adults, or as Mr. Grubb says it so lyrically:

"Lord save little children! For each of them has his Preacher to hound him down the dark river of fear and tonguelessness and never-a-door. Each one is mute and alone because there is no word for a child's fear and no ear to heed it. . . ."

The principle of art framed here for us to see is that no one can better tell the story of troubled childhood than the artist who has never ceased being a child. Down the corridor of time, Mr. Grubb listens to the echoes of his own boyhood as if they were returning footfalls growing louder.

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Then Harry Powell, a Jesus-loving psychopath who occupied the prison bunk directly above their dead father's, comes into the lives of the nine-year-old boy and the five-year-old girl. Having failed to wrest the name of the hiding place of the money from Ben Harper before he was executed, Powell sensed, with a kind of demented evangelism, that Harper loved his children as if they were human deities and that it was probably to them that the hiding place of the money was entrusted.

And so began the long night of the hunter and of the little ones he hunted. Young John instinctively knows, with the arrival of the money-crazed and demoniacal Powell, that evil has come into his short life for the first time. To impart this warning to his sister Pearl, clutching the doll-prize to her bosom, and to his own mother becomes for the boy a staggering experience that would overwhelm most adults. He sees to his dismay that he is not only older than his sister, but older and more perceptive of evil than the grownups—even his mother. All of this leads to murder and violence and the flight of the children across the valley of the Ohio River, their malevolent pursuer always at their heels reaching for the doll.

While the suspense is masterfully done, it is Mr. Grubb's knowingness of the secret ways of children, his uncanny feelings for the West Virginia land and its people which give the suspense a poetic breathlessness.

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American History in Miniature

THE OLD COUNTRY STORE. By Gerald Carson. Illustrated. *New York: Oxford University Press. 330 pp. $5.00.*

Reviewed by DELANCEY FERGUSON

The old-time general store was an American folkway; it has become a part of American folklore. It began as the frontier trading post, when frontier and tidewater were

✪ DELANCEY FERGUSON is chairman of the department of English at Brooklyn College. His principal books are *Pride and Passion: Robert Burns*; *Mark Twain: Man and Legend*; and *Letters of Robert Burns.*

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close together; it flourished throughout the first century of our national existence; it declined when the automobile abolished distance as distance had been felt in horse-and-wagon days. Mr. Carson holds that it is now extinct, which is true in a sense, though in hundreds of small communities in New England the locally owned and operated grocery is something far more than the "convenience store" which Mr. Carson calls it.

The general store was called into being by the unique conditions of American life. Communities of independent subsistence farmers needed a middleman from whom they could obtain the tools and supplies which they could not make or grow; they needed a market for the surplus produce which they could not themselves transport to the big centers. "Old records show that the country trader could cut hair, dig a grave, take a hand at sawing out hemlock boards, or run up a suit of clothes. In a society without stratification and without specialists, the merchant did what he could put his hand to profitably. . . ." He was local credit manager as well, and many of his customers settled their bills only once a year, if then. But the customers were independent farmers, not peons or sharecroppers. If they did not pay, the merchant might take them to court, but he lacked the absolute power of the "company store" in mining towns. Hence, if he were to avoid bankruptcy, he had to temper his acquisitiveness with a modicum of fair-dealing.

In such a history as this, complete generalization is impossible. What was true in Ohio in 1810 was not necessarily true in Vermont in 1890; nevertheless, the history of the country store is the economic history of America in miniature, from the days when potash and whisky were almost the only portable cash products of backwoods farms, to the days when Peruna and Wine of Cardui gave good church-members the pleasures of alcoholic stimulation without the sin. That checkered history Mr. Carson traces, with detail drawn from wide research: "The text of this book is based on unpublished journals and ledgers and other store records; on contemporary printed sources, almanacs, diaries, newspapers, trade journals, mail-order catalogues, trade cards, and odds and ends of advertising ephemera; on local histories, publications of historical and folklore societies, and the research of some modern authorities on business history." But he handles his knowledge lightly: statistics are held to a minimum and the human side of the narrative kept foremost. Only once or twice—notably in the chapter on the charms and snares of New York as they beset a country buyer in the 1850's—do the notebooks get the upper hand. The result is a mellow, nostalgic book, a social as well as an economic history.

Socially, the general store combined the functions of the Athenian agora and the British pub, with the important difference that the housewife made her presence and opinions felt in the store as she was never able to do in the other institutions. The store focused the working-day life of the community, as the churches of colonial New England had focused the religious and political life. Hence it focused also the folklore—the proverbs, the anecdotes of horse-trading, the tall tales. To this folklore Mr. Carson rightly gives generous space.

Much of it is admittedly traditional. The same story was told in dozens of places, and given local color by inserting the names of neighborhood characters. As Mr. Carson tells it, it was Hiram J. Bissell of Salisbury, Connecticut, who advised the customer with a stolen codfish under his coat either to wear a longer coat or steal a shorter fish, but the tale is told in other places. (And the Oxford Press ought not to have allowed a dried codfish to become "fried.") So, too, Mr. Carson has it that it was a Mr. Way of Hardwick, Vermont, who happened to have a church pulpit in stock when a joker asked for one. But that tale has been heard, with equal authority, in Sheffield, Massachusetts, and Lime Rock, Connecticut. A good story is at home anywhere.

Physically, the old country store may be extinct; spiritually, it is still alive. It was antiseptic to snobbishness and pomposity; and small communities, America over, are still the places where stuffed shirts have the most difficulty in staying inflated. Stephen Benét was not the first American artist, and

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he will not be the last, to draw courage and release of spirit from

"The echo of unkempt and drawling mirth
—The lounging mirth of cracker-barrel men,
Snowed in by winter, spitting at the fire,
And telling the disreputable truth
With the sad eye that marks the perfect liar. . . ."

Brief Comments

GOD'S COUNTRY AND MINE: A Declaration of Love Spiced with a Few Harsh Words. By Jacques Barzun. *Atlantic-Little, Brown. $5.00.*

French by birth but American since boyhood, Mr. Barzun is no mere foreigner giving us the supercilious once-over. When he says "God's country" he means it, and the criticisms he has to make presuppose that fact. What he says, with much shrewdness and much wit, is that all the disadvantages of living by "the American way" are consequences of the democratic ideals and the economic egalitarianism which the machine has made possible. The real question is only whether and to what extent they are inevitable consequences. It is not likely that we will give up either democratic government or technology; we shouldn't and we wouldn't. But he argues very eloquently both for some of the things we have lost and for the belief that we could regain many of them if we really wanted to. Though the subject is a familiar one, Mr. Barzun brings a great deal of freshness to it.

COMPANY MANNERS: A Cultural Inquiry into American Life. By Louis Kronenberger. *Bobbs-Merrill. $3.00.*

In entering this plea for moderation and sensibility, Mr. Kronenberger trains a number of small, well-polished mirrors on the urban middle and upper-middle classes of the professional and intellectual world. There will be a few shouts of "We couldn't possibly look like *that*!" but it is more likely that the general reception will be a silent one, punctuated occasionally by a nervous giggle.

The author is to be congratulated for not collapsing under the weight of his subtitle; for evaluating only those areas and groups with which he is acquainted; and for concluding with his own "Last Thoughts," rather than a pompous advice-to-the-lost chapter.

MAN'S UNCONQUERABLE MIND. By Gilbert Highet. *Columbia. $2.75.*

In its bicentennial celebrations, Columbia University is proudly asserting the right of man to the free play of his intellectual powers. Gilbert Highet, Anthon Professor of Latin Language and Literature, contributes to the anniversary publications an essay containing his own formulation of this faith. With the consummate skill of the scholar turned artist, he successively examines the "Powers" and "Limits" of knowledge. He does not attempt a philosophic treatise, but delivers a lively eulogy. "Unconquerable" he deems the mind, an "inexhaustible miracle." He concludes with a "Dedication" of the essay and himself to the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge.

BUT WE WERE BORN FREE. By Elmer Davis. *Bobbs-Merrill. $2.75.*

Through these six essays sounds the sane, measured voice of an angry, old-fashioned American. Elmer Davis sees the Constitution, especially the Bill of Rights, under organized attack by those who exploit legitimate fear of communism in the interest of personal power. The exploiters' real enemy, he says, documenting as he goes, is not communism but the independent thinker; their strategy is his intimidation through slander, hatred, censorship; the defense against them can only be a return to the fearless nonconformism through which American freedom was born. By turns ironic, hortatory, objective, Mr. Davis fires his heaviest guns in the long opening essay, "Through the Perilous Night." Elsewhere, he argues for interpretive rather than merely factual news reporting; analyzes the "doublethink" of investigating committees; relates tinkering

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with the Constitution to the attack on popular government.

ON EDUCATION AND FREEDOM. By Harold Taylor. *Abelard-Schuman. $3.50.*

The president of Sarah Lawrence College is an adroit and at least relatively persuasive advocate of the open-door policy in higher education. It is, perhaps, easier to define the door than what it leads to. Essentially the program outlined is an extension into higher education of the Progressive School Movement. The appeal is no doubt strongest when the young people assembled are interested primarily in the creative arts or in doing what they please intellectually. The dissenter will ask how many noses are rubbed on grindstones. But unquestionably the book is the most interesting available exposition of the educational views it expounds.

SCENES AND PORTRAITS: Memories of Childhood and Youth. By Van Wyck Brooks. *Dutton. $4.50.*

Mr. Brooks's account of his life up to the years of his first achievement in criticism is a work of the greatest charm and interest. Plainfield, New Jersey, the town in which he was born and brought up, may have been, as he calls it, "a suburb of Wall Street," but it was also by way of being a suburb of Concord, Florence, Paris—so haunted by culture, or at least by the memories and dreams of culture, that the young Brooks at the age of thirteen was irrevocably committed to the life of art and the career of a critic. The reminiscence of Plainfield comprises the larger part of the book, but the chapters on Harvard and on New York in the days when John Butler Yeats held forth at Petitpas' Restaurant are no less interesting, and the whole book constitutes a document of the first importance for the history of American culture.

THE SECOND TREE FROM THE CORNER. By E. B. White. *Harper. $3.00.*

This volume is composed of articles, verses, fancies, prefaces and various oddments from *The New Yorker.* Uneven in quality, they are all suffused with E. B. White's particular tone—the tone of melancholy that appears even in his funniest writings. But Mr. White's capacity for melancholy is matched by his capacity for indignation, particularly as directed at any kind of phony or demagogue or pedant or officious bureaucrat. High spots of this volume are "Song of the Queen Bee," "Afternoon of an American Boy" and "Death of a Pig."

THE MANNER IS ORDINARY. By John La Farge, S. J. *Harcourt, Brace. $4.75.*

Father La Farge, to paraphrase Goldsmith, has touched nothing he has not humanized and sanctified. Considered as autobiography, his book is a masterpiece of understatement. Read as a commentary on people met and tasks undertaken, it is beguiling, revealing and edifying in the best sense. Of special moment are the accounts of American society at the turn of the century; of progress in the field of interracial justice; and of European life from the time of stability, through war and tyranny, to the present uneasy period of reconstruction. Memorable also are anecdotes, fresh and good, about John La Farge, Sr., Henry James and many others.

THE PROPHET ARMED: Trotsky, 1879-1921. By Isaac Deutscher. *Oxford. $6.00.*

In this scholarly and sensitive study, Trotsky emerges as the hero of the Russian Revolution, the prophet who realized his vision of it by inflaming men's minds, and who preserved it by coercing their bodies. This first part of a two-volume biography deals with Trotsky's career till 1921; it shows how his imagination, intellect and will responded to and relentlessly shaped the historical forces which finally culminated in the Bolshevik triumph.

The book has a hero, an emerging villain —Stalin, and a thesis which insists that Trotsky's life described a classical tragedy. The thesis, however, tends to blur the great, perhaps unanswerable questions. Trotsky was more than a pawn of some irresistible world-spirit; to plot, lead and pervert a

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revolution, despite one's own forebodings of ultimate distortion and defeat in victory, is to assume a terrible responsibility.

THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA. By Sarah Gertrude Millin. *Knopf. $4.50.*

This third revision of Mrs. Millin's history of South Africa, which first appeared in 1926 and again in 1934, is a definitive source book. Eloquent in her writing but factual in her approach, she makes no impassioned plea for the Afrikaners, the English, Indians, Coloureds, Bastaards, Kaffirs —the list is almost endless—who now find themselves involved in one of the most critical confusions of racism. Mrs. Millin reports the historical facts, observes the results, but offers no pat formulas of solution. Her concluding battery of questions and ideas is so provocative that many readers will be motivated to explore further the growing body of literature on the subject.

RUM JUNGLE. By Alan Moorehead. Illustrated. *Scribner's. $3.50.*

Journalist Alan Moorehead's exploration of the vast central and northern wilderness of his native Australia is charged with the emotional impact of a homecoming. Although he knows Australia intimately and describes it with perception, sympathy and humor, it is perhaps essentially a mystery, an isolated enigma: a weird jumble of coral reef, desert and jungle; of resort hotel, railroad and beachcomber; of gold mine, cattle ranch and naked bushman. The cockatoo, the emu and the wallaby, the koala and the kangaroo watch the rockets of Woomera and the uranium mines of Rum Jungle from the eternal bush. Here have come together "the infinitely primitive past and the infinitely fantastic future."

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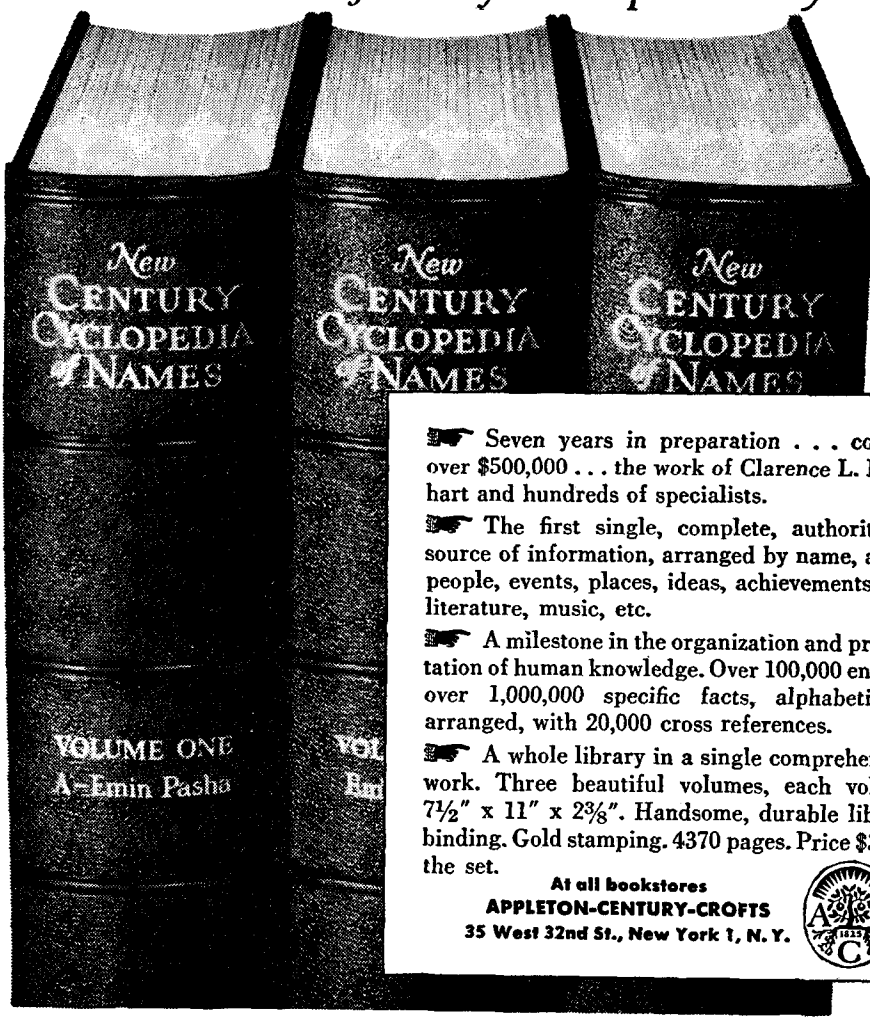

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the humane and witty tact for which he is known.

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THE GENTLEMAN OF RENAISSANCE FRANCE. By William Leon Wiley. Illustrated. *Harvard. $5.00.*

Professor Wiley draws a vivid portrait of the gentleman, or nobleman rather, who succeeded the medieval knight. From king to provincial *gentilhomme*, we see him here in his daily life, at court or in château, at war or in tourney, dueling, hunting, dying, all described in rich contemporary detail. In real life the nobleman often lived up to the ideal of Castiglione's *Courtier*, though Italians thought the French lacked polish; but a Bayard or a Ronsard would compensate. We do not learn if the vigorous and splendid nobleman was worth his keep, since the book does not consider his service to society as soldier, ruler or farmer; but his private life makes a colorful tapestry.

THE FINER TONE: Keats' Major Poems. By Earl R. Wasserman. *Johns Hopkins. $4.00.*
JOHN KEATS: The Living Year. By Robert Gittings. *Harvard. $3.50.*

In the foreword to his admirable study, Dr. Wasserman says, "I have limited myself to five poems because they are the only major poems by Keats that I have learned to read to my own satisfaction." This remark, which would have astonished a lover of Keats up to thirty years ago, will indicate the assumption which underlies the work of the best modern scholars and critics of Keats, for whom Keats is not, as he was once thought to be, a poet primarily of surfaces, but a poet of depths—a profound poet and a difficult one.

Dr. Wasserman undertakes to set forth his understanding of the five poems in the explicatory manner which is identified with the so-called New Critics. But he does not subscribe to the New Critical dogma that a poem may be studied only in its text—his critical method takes free and happy license to bring to bear upon the text any matter that scholarship has made available to him.

Mr. Gittings' book is the perfect complement to Dr. Wasserman's. Its method is that of scholarly research based upon a very precise reading of the poems and having in view a still more precise reading. Mr. Gittings investigates in great detail the circumstances of Keats's life during the year of his greatest production, 1819, in the belief that actuality may be made to shed light upon whole poems and particular passages. In this belief Mr. Gittings is eminently justified. Inevitably the particular result of his researches which will be thought the most striking is his having established the identity of the "lady of Hastings." Keats's mysterious references to this attractive person have never sufficiently piqued the curiosity of biographers, and Amy Lowell was skeptical of her existence. What Mr. Gittings tells us of the actuality of Mrs. Isabella Jones, of her temperament, and of the poet's relation to her goes far toward explaining certain of the erotic elements of Keats's greatest poems.

BEYOND CRITICISM. By Karl Shapiro. *Nebraska. $3.00.*

In three essays the author pleads for "an atmosphere of neutrality," dominated neither by Culture nor History, in which the poet may create freely. But he has his own axes to grind: "The artist like Picasso declares war on the world and especially on

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the world of his medium. . . ." And he often lapses into jargon, as when we are told that in Shakespeare and Mozart "ego and time-consciousness are practically non-existent." Mr. Shapiro argues that a poem must be sincere, and states that "personal experience plus obedience to the laws of beauty . . . is the equation for the creative act." Books by poets about poetry are famously inconclusive, and this is no exception.

THE DESERT MUSIC AND OTHER POEMS. By William Carlos Williams. *Random. $3.00.*

The early poems of William Carlos Williams often seemed skeletal, with images—a wheelbarrow glazed with rain, leaves "clashing" in the wind—which, in their very nakedness, were an angry protest. In *Paterson* there was a ground swell of feelings, a glimpse of depth, under a fragmented surface. Now in *The Desert Music* the poet celebrates "the female principle," flowers and stars. After so long a reticence and so many exceptions taken, Dr. Williams seems to agree with Rilke that there is no defense but defenselessness, and the result is some of the finest lyric verse of our time.

THE PONDER HEART. By Eudora Welty. Illustrated. *Harcourt, Brace. $3.00.*

It is just as well that Miss Welty has to state at the outset that "The towns of Clay and Polk [Mississippi] are fictitious, and their inhabitants and situations products of the author's imagination, not intended to portray real people or real situations"; no one would believe it at the end of the book.

Heaven and the critics will have to help anyone who wanders through these 156 pages in search of symbolism. But the real difficulty in appraising the strengths and weaknesses of the Ponder family will come to the reader who thinks he can laugh harder and longer than the author.

THE HORSEMAN ON THE ROOF. By Jean Giono. Translated by Jonathan Griffin. *Knopf. $4.00.*

One of the pleasantest tales to come from Europe in the last few years is this story of the flight of the handsome colonel of the Hussars, returning to Italy through Provence in 1838. It is a grim pleasantness, for Provence is in the grip of the Asiatic cholera, and the fear of contagion makes each traveler suspect. Death is everywhere, and no one is completely trustworthy—no one, that is, except Angelo, the horseman. Few more heroic characters have been described, or more clinical descriptions of cholera. It is a far cry from the pessimism of so many French novels, and a most entertaining reading experience.

THE COBWEB. By William Gibson. *Knopf. $3.95.*

Mr. Gibson begins his first and last chapters with "The trouble about the living-room drapes . . ." and window decorations have never served a better purpose than in the framework of this account of the occupants of Castle House Clinic for Nervous Disorders. Although the author gives greater attention to the staff than to the patients, this is no *Snake Pit* in reverse. At every turn—and the story is labyrinthine—clipped dialogue and swift passages of insight and description allow the reader to identify with almost all the characters.

Mr. Gibson is to be congratulated for not having employed his obvious knowledge of psychotherapy and its idiom as short cuts to characterization and action.

CRESS DELAHANTY. By Jessamyn West. *Harcourt, Brace. $3.75.*

A girl's growing pains are the painless subject of this pleasurable novel. It could easily deteriorate into a fluttery sentimentality, but Miss West's sure hand holds it all steady from start to finish, from Cress aged twelve until she enters college. Mother can't believe her little girl is interested in boys, but Father knows better—he even sees a sign of budding love in the way Cress cracks the front teeth of a playmate named Edwin, and her own innocent comment betrays her: "You don't knock people down you are sorry for." Many authors have watched a boy grow older. Miss West does yeoman's service for the distaff side.

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The Reader Replies

THE READER REPLIES *carries miscellaneous comments by readers and authors on various articles which have appeared in the magazine. All communications should be addressed to: The Editor,* THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, *Phi Beta Kappa Hall, Williamsburg, Va., and should not exceed 300 words in length except on request. Because of limitations of space, we cannot guarantee to print all letters received.*—EDITOR.

More About Freedom and Loyalty

Mr. Riesman's remarks to those who are alarmed by the attacks on civil liberties in America sound to me something like this: "I know you are being kicked around a bit, but it doesn't hurt much when you're used to it, really it doesn't. And besides, if you didn't scream so loudly, maybe they wouldn't kick you so hard." As advice, this is on a par with that of those eminent persons who tell us that if we don't keep still about rising unemployment we'll talk ourselves into a depression.

Mr. Riesman suggests that a certain amount of imperviousness to political alarms is healthy, and he is probably right, but it is hard to believe that apathy or indifference is the cure for what ails us now.

W. R. STEINHOFF
Ann Arbor, Michigan

★ ★ ★

May I express my admiration for David Riesman's "Some Observations on Intellectual Freedom"? The essay brings new and brilliant light to that dreadfully complex subject, and THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR is to be congratulated on having provided the occasion for its appearance. By illuminating some of the false presuppositions which impel so many intellectuals today, Mr. Riesman has performed a more important task than he would have by merely repeating routine attacks on the professional traducers. A penetrating diagnosis ought to be more welcome at this time than the most tender lament.

FRITZ STERN
New York, New York

★ ★ ★

I have just reread Mr. Riesman's recent article and want to make some comments that I have been thinking about ever since I first read it. There are, in my opinion, many wise and even profound remarks in the article. I say this not because of the prevailing American academic habit of praising before you criticize, but, quite simply, because I admire the article greatly. It says—probably for the first time—what so desperately needs to be said: that many American intellectuals justify their cowardice by scare stories, that others behave bravely because they are afraid of being thought cowards, that still others (and these are my real *bêtes noires*) get a gleam in their eyes when they tell you the latest horror about McCarthy—a tell-tale gleam that reveals the awful truth that they are thoroughly enjoying themselves.

All this the article says, and wonderfully well. And I wholeheartedly agree with the temper of as well as the overwhelming majority of statements in the article. But if it is useful to correct the attitude of Mr. MacLeish, I think that my much smaller dissent may be of some use as well. I feel that the article has the defect of failing to give adequate weight to the following considerations.

First, the scare stories are all Mr. Riesman says they are: they are masochistic, they partake of the self-fulfilling prophecy, they are often excuses. But they are also something else—they are, by and large, true. The sad fate of the intellectual at this or that college is not the scare story that worries me most. But what of the employees at Fort Monmouth, suspended without pay and without definite charges for months? What of the (apparently rather anti-intellectual) government employee mentioned in the *Reporter* story of March 2, 1954

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("Victim of Nameless Accusers," a dreadful title but still a shocking and depressing document)? The point must be made that injustices of this kind go on around us with great frequency, and the intellectual (even the non-*Nation*-reader, even the moderate who refuses to believe in the *New Statesman*'s charges of the "Reign of Terror" in this country) who hears of such things should not remain silent or unconcerned. I do not have a prescription: to retail these stories may mean that we join the men who spread the very climate of fear that they are deploring. But is not the failure to tell them equally dangerous?

Second, the kind of intellectual conformity which Mr. Riesman so rightly deplores is not the sole property of the gloomy anti-McCarthyites. There are other groups, often writing for *Commentary* or the *Partisan Review*, who have made of professions of anti-Stalinism a kind of loyalty oath, and who take dissent from them on political issues as an indication that the dissenter is "objectively" (a hideous word!) a dupe of Stalinism. There may be some such dupes left, and some of them, I take it, may write for the *Nation*, but what happens to the intellectual who, let us say, *still* is not satisfied that the Smith Act is constitutional, *still* thinks poorly of Franco, *still* dislikes the whole loyalty program as it is now being carried out? I happen to hold all these views, and I feel sure that some intellectuals whom both Mr. Riesman and I know would call me "naive"—if not worse—for holding them.

Thirdly, there is in the air an apologetic conservatism that has gone much further than it should to deserve the name "healthy reaction." To be sure, we had to free ourselves from the Populism of a Parrington, and from some of the vulgarities implicit in any conspiracy theory of history—even the theory of capitalist conspiracy. But we have now reached a state of affairs in which threadbare apologies like Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind* are called "splendid" in scholarly journals, and in which any concern with the economic basis of politics, or with ideology, is decried as left-wing or fellow-traveling.

I mention the second and third points because they suggest to me that the problem of the American intellectual is even more deep-seated than Mr. Riesman's article suggests. Many in our fraternity have a deep feeling of guilt about the days in which they had no enemies to the left, and they are now desperately trying to re-establish their reputations by embracing conservatism, by imposing conformity, and by nervously deploring dissent.

But these criticisms aside, I agree with Mr. Riesman that after all is said, the intellectual stands alone with his convictions, and that he must have the courage to be unpopular—even with fellow-intellectuals.

PETER GAY
Columbia University
New York, New York

★ ★ ★

Postscript:

In "Values in Context" [AS: Winter, 1952-53], I tried to set forth some of the complexities and ironies that arise when what one says to challenge one audience misfires either with that audience or with another, unintended one; I observed that these problems were inevitable in a heterogeneous society like ours, since one could neither say everything to everyone at once nor be wholly sure of maintaining a restricted audience. Some of these ambiguities of communication have been driven home to me once again by the reception of my recent article, "Some Observations on Intellectual Freedom" [AS: Winter, 1953-54].

For instance, when I drew on this article for a lecture at Mills College in October, 1953, I was sharply criticized from the floor by Professor Laurence Sears of Mills; he chided me for lack of passionate concern for intellectual freedom and for allegedly minimizing the damage done liberals by Senator McCarthy. I had expected such reactions as part of the give-and-take of academic discourse, and had even hoped for them to help clarify the available spectrum of positions for the Mills College students. However, while I had refused to allow the broadcast or televising of the talk, the "attack" by Professor Sears drew the attention of the local papers, and our

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differences were reported in a distorted fashion, especially by the Hearst press. I had not expected to be overheard by reactionary editors: to tell them the "same" things I was telling liberal Mills faculty and students and their friends would, if conceivable at all, have required an altered approach, and for them I would have emphasized the marginal and intra-academic nature of the disagreements between Professor Sears (or Archibald MacLeish) and myself. But of course one irony inside this irony is that it is very difficult to get across to people without academic training any such dialectical intentions: such people want to know whether something is so or isn't so, and can't see any harm in broadcasting a debate even if all it does is to encourage them to feel smug or even vindictive about professors. (*Time*, however, which to my dismay picked up the story from the Bay area, did understand this point and strove to present a conscientious account.) At the same time, as my article declares, I have never been willing to accept the "don't wash dirty linen" position, which implies that a group under attack must stop talking unless all exits are sealed. If we are not to succumb to overwhelming "inside" pressures, we have to take a good many chances, and will have to go on making mistakes.

Even so, I must add that when I wrote this article (in the spring and early summer of 1953), I did so with a good deal of misgiving lest it comfort those intellectuals, rather rare in my own circles but no doubt plentiful, who might take it as an excuse not to worry. At times, even the most intrepid among us may secretly long for excuses for inaction, and I was aware that, in criticizing the panic doctrine that America is on the road to fascism (my opinion in part based on the none too hopeful ground that we have always had illegality and violence in this country), I might leave some readers even more smug than before. I now think that I did not pay sufficient heed to my own misgivings, for some reactions favorable to my article have had this smug quality; on rereading what I wrote, I feel I should have emphasized more some of the impalpable erosions of intellectual freedom that are related both to the general pressures hostile to individualism and to the specific tensions and irritabilities of the cold war.

Certainly, since my article was written, I have encountered painfully little evidence of the willingness of American intellectuals, let alone businessmen, lawyers, broadcasters, and government officials, to come out swinging in the old free-hand way, not only against McCarthy but against the careful, excessively fine-spun arguments of many of those whom McCarthy has attacked: the latter, if innocent of Communist ties, are often deferential and conciliatory, neither expressing firmness and conviction nor making use of the traditional American pattern of political vilification for one's own protection. What is involved here is perhaps not so much the rational fear of people for their careers; rather, people fear public embroilment with a bully, which can become an unbelievably harassing full-time job. Many of us can recall, or prefer not to recall, our dismal encounters with bullies in high school or earlier; being Americans, unprotected by arrogance of class or family, we could not be sure we were in the right if we lost or ran away from such a fight. Thus, in dealing with a demagogue, we often lack assurance and are unprepared for virulence and bad faith; at times, we fall back on argumentative weapons deemed weak by a sports-loving public. And this weakness would seem especially grave when one is dealing with Senator McCarthy, whose sales-appeal to the newly well-paid but socially uneasy strata in his constituency is as much his outspoken contempt for all symbols (such as Harvard, England, the State Department, or Army brass) of older and better educated strata, as is his opportunistic and picayune domestic anti-communism.

Moreover, I sense among many members of the intellectual community an understandable tendency to establish our patriotism, our incontrovertible loyalty and anti-communism, as a kind of public-relations gesture. And we are likely to argue that we are better fighters against communism at home and abroad than McCarthy or

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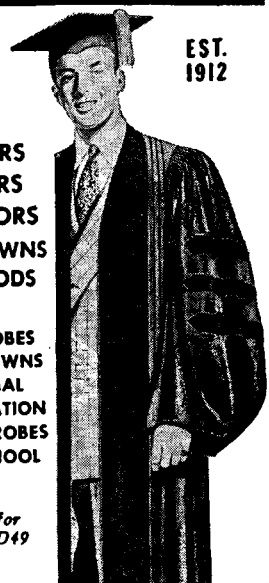

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Counter-Attack. These declarations are true, yet they have an air of enforced piety about them, like the declarations of some comic-book and pocket-book publishers who, instead of ridiculing the hypocrisy and denouncing the unfairness and contempt for freedom of the Gathings Committee, proclaim their own desire to avoid "obscenity" in cover and content. The fact that we feel such politic declarations must be made, that we cannot have our virtue (or the viciousness of our critics) taken for granted, is a sign of the increasing pressure against freedom that I think now I did not take sufficiently into account in my article.

DAVID RIESMAN
Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland

Dilemma of "Man for Himself"

In "The Cardinal Virtues" [AS: Winter, 1953-54], Max Eastman runs squarely into the dilemma facing every advocate of "man for himself." Every writer concerned with the development of a scientific morality, emphasizing the development of the unique potentialities of the individual, must bridge the gap between the individual and his human environment. By stating that the virtue of imaginative sympathy is necessary for an individual's personal development, Mr. Eastman attempts to bring Christian charity into the orbit of autonomous selfhood. The rationale for this synthesis is not convincing. He bases his argument on man's gregarious nature and his need for fellowship necessitated by "multiplicity and the orphaned condition of man." It is one thing, however, to speak of the socializing process of internalizing the experience of others and quite another to state that "taking thought of others is a great joy." The virtuous man's response to the social environment is not determined by the awareness of the experience of others any more than the criminal's behavior results from an inability to internalize other roles.

The "orphaned condition of man" might bring men together in an attempt to overcome their isolation and sense of meaninglessness. However, any motive growing out of weakness and personal deficiency leads not to a spontaneous sympathy and love for other men but almost inevitably to an attempt to overcome collectively this deficiency. Human fellowship is gained in this venture but always at the expense of an out-group, which provides the necessary opposition for social cohesion.

Modern man has yet to come up with a social ethic, surpassing the Christian, which will re-establish the primary bonds of folk societies, much less a morality providing for that disinterested sympathy necessary for any permanent solution of his dilemma.

WILLIAM H. STRAIN
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey

Tawdry Tawdle?

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR came today. I always open the wrapping with impatience; for I have enjoyed my subscription.

But unfortunately I began with the first article, "A Modest Proposal for the Care and Use of Subversives," by Alan Valentine [AS: Spring, 1954]. A feeling of disgust enveloped me before the first paragraph was finished. I too have read Swift, and found this so totally unoriginal that I could almost anticipate each new sentence. I don't believe something like this belongs in our magazine. It isn't independent thought—it's tawdry tawdle. Now it is fashionable for intellectuals to denounce the Wisconsin Senator. All right, I agree he is more harmful to our country than any proved Communist. But this article is no decent attack; it is cheap.

Having just finished *But We Were Born Free*, by Elmer Davis, I think I know how an irate man, with deep faith in our country, would write. He does not have the ponderous style of Mr. Valentine, but he has a quality of honesty which excuses his rather unliterary technique.

I've read things in THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR which I have not always understood and with which I have not agreed, but never before something which nauseated me with its transparent stealing of ideas and vulgar presentation.

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Before long I shall join my husband in Japan for duty at an isolated service base. I expected to take THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR with me as a breath of intelligence and the scholarly atmosphere of home. I hope there won't be more articles like these to make me ashamed of my gold key.

ELINOR NOBLE MARTINEZ
Canaan, Connecticut

The Future of Books

The AMERICAN SCHOLAR Forum on "The Future of Books in America" was an interesting reflection of the points of view of authors, publishers, critics and librarians; and I am sure it will provide invaluable material for future historians of our culture. What I missed in the discussion was adequate recognition of the enthusiastic new book-reading public, the habits of whom are becoming fixed on the basis of more and better books being made available within reach of every taste and every purse. Our experience during the current overproduction of inexpensive paper-bound editions reveals that the finest books, nonfiction as well as fiction, are doing well—the ordinary books, the mediocre books are creating most of the unsold inventory. Whatever the future pattern of publishing, millions of readers have become accustomed to good literature at a low price, and, above all, conveniently on sale near home or job. When this sort of demand exists, the ingenious and independent American publisher, despite the disappointment of a bad season, will find a method of reaching the ever-growing book audience at a profit.

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The recent Forum on "The Future of Books in America" [AS: Spring, 1954] was extraordinarily timely, revealing—and saddening. The discerning reader gains at least four impressions that stand out like Mars at perihelion. First, it appears certain that the spate of soft-cover books slowly is supplanting the pulp magazines, many of them pervertingly trashy. No decent mind can frown on this symptom. Second, it is beyond question that during the past decade, millions who previously seldom, if ever, read books have acquired the book-reading habit. Is it unreasonable to hope that the habit—*qua* habit—ultimately may lead the masses progressively to wiser selections? Third, it seems beyond question that the United States is registering a genuine cultural lag. Mediocrity is rampant. Standards are faltering, or falling. Tastes are strongly adulterated. Subtly and enticingly sex is exploited, not only in print, but by radio, the movies and television. Materialism is the reigning practical philosophy; and the arbiters, the *censores morum*, are confused and uncertain about remedial measures, for the plain reason that the public is avid for the sensational and salacious. Fourth, admittedly the book-printing industry is sick, in some quarters *very* sick; and while no one expects it will succumb, the prospect for the indeterminate future is not pleasing. Inasmuch as

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all participants admit that too many books are being printed and since the publishers are specifically responsible for this, may not one aptly venture the classic "Physician, heal thyself"?

LABAN LACY RICE
Gulfport, Florida

In Appreciation

In the dozen years during which I have subscribed to THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR I have enjoyed many of your issues, but perhaps none has ever matched the fine Spring '54 issue. I found all of the articles highly interesting.

I appreciate the fact that Frederick F. Manfred is probably a very modest man, yet curiosity impels me to wonder if he will not let us know what were the "three words" which Sinclair Lewis wrote in his book for Mr. Manfred.

Mr. Nicolson's remarks about biography struck me as being most valuable, with one exception. He says that a "pure" biography can only be written about a person whom the writer respects. Does that mean that we can have no "pure" biographies of such men as Hitler, Stalin and Attila? The caution that Mr. Nicolson advocates in choosing subjects for biographies would seem to leave the field of Hitler biographies to the Nazis and Stalin ones to the Communists. That strikes me as playing with fire.

BERNARD SINSHEIMER
Hollywood, California

★ ★ ★

Just a note to tell you how stimulating and enjoyable the Winter, 1953-54 issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR was to me. Your usual high standards found themselves humbled by this issue.

Who could ask for more poetry than "Alaskan Summer," by Fraser Darling; more humor than "The Solemn Style of Modern Critics," by Wallace Douglas; more thought-provoking articles than "The Loud-Voiced Victory," by David Cort, and "The Cardinal Virtues," by Max Eastman? And the poetry was stimulating, too.

In short, thanks for two pleasant evenings!

RICHARD L. BOWEN
Sacramento, California

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